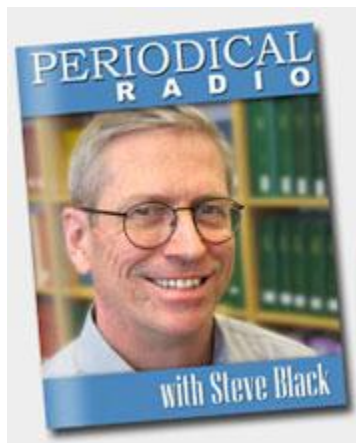


Periodical Radio: Interviews with Editors



A series of 34 interviews with editors of journals and magazines conducted October 2006 through July 2009 from the internet radio studio at the College of Saint Rose in Albany, NY.

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Periodical Radio: Interviews with Editors

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1: *Voices: Journal of the New York Folklore Society*

Interview with Ellen McHale, Executive Director of the New York Folklore Society,
October 2006

Welcome to Periodical Radio, the program about magazines and journals. I'm your host, Steve Black, Librarian at the College of Saint Rose in Albany, NY, and author of the book *Serials in Libraries: Issues and Practices*.

Our program today is about *Voices: Journal of the New York Folklore Society*. This semi-annual periodical is a membership magazine of the New York Folklore Society. Quoting from a recent issue of *Voices*, "The NY State Folklore society is a nonprofit statewide organization dedicated to furthering cultural equity and cross cultural understanding through programs that nurture folk cultural expressions within communities where they originate, share these traditions across cultural boundaries, and enhance the understanding and appreciation of folk culture."

Voices' mix of research articles and stories, interviews, and other informal content is unusual for a periodical. The Spring/Summer 2006 issue has seven feature articles and 12 departments and columns in 48 pages. The longest article is seven pages; many are one page. The design is simple but attractive, with black & white photos and subtle use of two tones of yellow to highlight titles and sidebars, and text is divided into three columns per page. It's printed on heavy weight glossy paper, and the text and photos are sharp and easy to read.

The content of *Voices* is remarkable in the broad diversity of topics addressed in the articles and columns. For example, in one recent issue, there are scholarly pieces about a community quilt and about college students' trips to spooky places. One article is about folklore literature in subscription full-text databases. Another is about cab drivers in NY City, and one about "Michigans," a type of chili dog popular in Plattsburg. There's a piece about filming the creation of a Buddhist sand mandala, and one that reminiscences about a Grandma, and an obituary of a folk musician.

Regular columns include Upstate, Downstate, Foodways, Bookshelf Essentials, Good Spirits, NY Folklore Society News, Eye of the Camera, and Book Reviews.

The NY Folklore society's web site at www.nyfolklore.org contains a wealth of information that complements their journal. Their web site includes an index of the journal and its predecessors, *New York Folklore* (1975-1998) and *New York Folklore Quarterly* (1945-1974). Some full text content from the journals is available on their web site, but they do not have cover-to-cover full text online.

My guest today is Ellen McHale, Executive Director of the New York Folklore Society. Ellen holds a Ph.D. in Folklore and Folklife from the University of Pennsylvania. She's a native New Yorker, she has worked for the last seventeen years as a consulting folklorist in many areas of upstate New York and western Massachusetts. Her past positions include director of the Schoharie County Historical Society/Old Stone Fort Museum (1990-1994), director of the Shaker Heritage Society (1986-1987), and assistant director of the Folklife Center of the International House of Philadelphia (1983-1985). She was a Fulbright Scholar in Sweden, and has taught folklore courses at Empire State College and for Hudson Valley Community College in Troy, New York.

Steve: Ellen, welcome to the show.

Ellen: Thank you.

Steve: First of all, our show is about *Voices, Journal of the New York Folklore Society*. What is *Voices* about?

Ellen: The mission of the magazine is to include the voices of people with New York state and their traditional arts and culture. We try to bring in articles that have to do with first person use of folklore material. That is in looking at it from the outside, looking in and making an evaluation or scholarly pieces on the folklore. That's included in the articles, but in a downplayed sense. We really want to hear the voices of the folklore itself coming through.

Steve: I guess now's a good time to talk for a moment about just what folklore is.

Ellen: Depending on who you ask, the definition can be more or less expansive. But folklore is the artistic ways people make sense of everyday life. So they take their experiences and alliances and allegiances they have and create a way to share that knowledge together within a group. So groups are important in folklore. People share folklore from person to person, sometimes it's historical. Sometimes things are passed down through families or communities. Folklore is emergent, is coming all of the time. If there's a catastrophic event, there's folklore that happens after that, stories that are told that are passed from one person to another to help make sense of that event.

Steve: And *Voices* records that and preserves it?

Ellen: Yes. It's a peer reviewed journal. We solicit some articles, but for the most part we have people who send things to us. So the content for each issue is somewhat dependent on what people submit to us. But yes, we do have articles that deal with historical material, but we also have many articles that deal with contemporary life in New York state.

Steve: How long as *Voices* been published?

Ellen: Well, *Voices* itself is relatively new, since 2000. But it actually is a continuation of a much older journal. We've been publishing for 60 years. We started out as the *New York Folklore Quarterly*, four times a year. Then it slowly was collapsed into one issue per year for several years. In 1999, we decided to create *Voices* to try to bring it back to the quarterly. When the *Quarterly* was founded in 1945, people wanted to have a lot of solicitations from the field. They wanted ordinary people in New York state, not scholars, submit materials about their own history and background and communities. That was the mission of the first journal. When it moved to an annual, it became more scholarly. In 2000 we decided to move it back to the intent of the original *New York Folklore Quarterly*. So that's when *Voices* was born.

Steve: One of the questions I had was, *Voices* is an unusual publication in that it is a mix of popular, first-person narratives and scholarly material. What makes that mix work?

Ellen: I think the scholarly material works because it's good scholarship, it's peer reviewed, so we make sure the scholarship is good. But we also demand—maybe that's a little too strong—we ask authors to keep the language jargon free, so people can read it if you don't have any background in folklore, or a just little background, you should be able to follow along with what the author is trying to convey. We also want to preserve the voices of people who possess a folklore, or who have the folklore and write it down, for example people who write pieces about their own background. That is just so rich in its content. We think those two things really work well together. Whatever level you come at the subject, it should be able to speak to you.

Steve: I was struck when looking at a recent issue by the variety of things that were covered. There was a scholarly piece on trips to spooky places, an obituary, stories about hot dogs, and grandmothers, and ponds, and quilts, and cab drivers. Is that what makes folklore interesting?

Ellen: I think so. That's why I'm interested in it. You can really look at everything around you, and draw out of that the variety in life that I find fascinating. That shows up in *Voices*. We have articles from urban environments, from rural environments. There is a commonality of what folklore and folk traditions are within someone's functioning life.

Steve: Who are your readers?

Ellen: We're actually world wide. We have subscribers who are libraries in academic institutions throughout the world. We send it to India, Turkey, Sweden. So that's our core, academic libraries. Then we have individual members who receive the journal, probably 65% are based in New York State, but we have people subscribing from other states within the union and Canada. Sometimes people join the New York Folklore Society to get the journal because they're native New Yorkers and they've moved to

Florida, for example, and they want to keep in touch with what is happening in New York state. It's a mix between about half academic libraries and half individual subscribers.

Steve: To be a subscriber, though, you're a member, is that correct?

Ellen: Yes.

Steve: How did you come to the decision that you wanted to do it that way, and what are the benefits to the society of having the journal subscription tied directly to being a member?

Ellen: That's a hard question, because it's a little bit debatable. I'm not sure we ever really discussed it, and it's something that could be discussed. Since the journal was formed in 1945, it has always been a benefit of membership. When you joined the New York Folklore Society in 1944 you got the journal. We've had people that we know joined just because they like the journal. Now it's a little iffier, because we do other things as a society. In 1990 we moved from being a solely academic organization to one that has a service component. We serve traditional artists in the state, we serve people are academic folklorists and people who are working in what we call the public sector—applied anthropologists, ethnomusicologists and other folklorists. So you can join the Folklore Society for those service reasons, and not even really care about the journal, but you do get it. It's a mixed group, and I don't actually know the answer to the question. If people do join and don't want the journal, we don't really know. But it's a benefit of membership and always has been.

Steve: I see, thank you. *Voices* has an acquisitions editor, a managing editor, a photography editor and an editorial board. What do these folks do, and how do you coordinate all the work?

Ellen: Well, everybody has a specific job. When we designed *Voices* in 1999, it actually took us a whole year examining what we wanted to have happen and what we thought was important. We felt first of that photography was important. Our journal was never heavily photographic, and we felt photos needed to be highlighted, and they had to be good. So that's when we decided to have a photography editor, so that person actually is the quality control person for the photos, and also helps us choose the images that might be in an article. We do like to have photos in every article. The acquisitions editor is a folklorist. She has a Ph.D. in folklore, and her job is to find articles, to vet the originals. If people send submissions unsolicited, she makes the first decision of whether this is appropriate for the journal. After all that work is done, she sends it to our managing editor, who basically does all the copyediting. I'm actually as the executive director of the Folklore Society a little bit out of the picture until I see the final issue. I usually get a table of contents, so I know everybody's done their job. Then I see the first proof. So it's always a surprise when it comes in, even though I know what the articles are going to be.

To see them all laid out and what photos are there is kind of fun. But it is a group effort, and everybody works well together, and they meet. We also have a designer who is involved in the early stages of putting each issue together. They all live in central New York, so they all meet without me and do their thing.

Steve: And it works.

Ellen: And it works.

Steve: Very good. Do have a personal all time favorite piece, article that was published in *Voices*?

Ellen: I don't myself, but I can tell you that there are certain issues, because what happens after the journal is published, we put it on the web. We actually don't put the whole articles on the web. We haven't made that leap yet. But we have almost whole articles. So someone reads it and sometimes comes back to us and asks for the whole thing. We have abstracts and excerpts on the web, and I can tell you which ones have been popular, because I get responses all the time. We had an article several years ago about the Quinceañera, the sweet fifteen birthday party that happens in the Latino, mostly Puerto Rican, community, when a girl reaches fifteen. I still receive several requests in a month for that article, or requests for me to give information on how to make a Quinceañera for somebody's daughter. So that's one that has struck a really responding chord. The other one that comes to mind is, we had an article maybe in the first issue or the second issue about a man who makes guiros, which is a musical instrument. This person was from I think the Dominican Republic. He plays merengue music, and it's a scraper instrument that's made out of tin and has holes in the design, but it's a rhythm instrument. To make a long story short, we get requests through our web site about where to buy a guiro. So that's another story we know people read a lot. There are certain articles that come to mind that have really struck some chord some place.

Steve: So you have a record on your web site of all the articles that have been published in the three publications since 1945?

Ellen: Yes, since 1945. We have an index, actually. You can go to the New York Folklore Society web site and search on a topic or subject, and it will pop up all the articles that we've ever published. Some of the back issues we still have, so we can access them. If we don't have them, we can help you find them.

Steve: Is that an important mission of the publication, to make the archival information available?

Ellen: I think so, yes. We've thought, and probably will down the line as the quarterlies, our back issues disappear, and some issues we don't have any more of, we'll begin to put

whole articles on the web site so people can actually get them online. But we haven't made that leap yet. We do feel it is important to have all this material available.

Steve: Have you discussed whether you'll continue having a print publication once you've done that?

Ellen: Not seriously. I know that's that wave of the future.

Steve: Maybe.

Ellen: [laughs] We haven't made that leap yet. I personally like something in my hands. Who knows? Eventually maybe that will become what happens and everything will be electronic.

Steve: So you see that as a conversation down the road, but it hasn't been a topic that you've seriously looked at yet.

Ellen: Right. It's been a small conversation, and not a serious conversation. So down the road it might become more serious.

Steve: We librarians still like the print, but who knows what will happen in the future. What are the most important or urgent issues for folklorists?

Ellen: Right now?

Steve: Yes.

Ellen: I'm seeing in the last ten years a real shrinking of our field. For me, that's an urgent issue. I see universities with folklore programs that grew up in the 1970's. I was actually a child of that era, when folklore was burgeoning. It was the tail end of the folk revival, and people were interested in folklore and folk music and folk art. There was a different feeling on campuses, too. Those programs that started at that point I see now, those professors retiring and not being replaced. So within New York state, that's a real issue. There are fewer programs than there were, and so I feel that for undergraduates, if you don't get exposed to the subject and the discipline at the undergraduate level, it makes it more difficult to enter into the graduate level of inquiry. That's the biggest issue. I'm not sure that's what you expected, but for me that's the issue in folklore, is a real shrinking of the field. I don't know whether it's cyclical and that will change, but academic institutions are moving away from, maybe this is a broad overstatement, but the issues in folklore are being at this point not in the forefront.

Steve: What issues would those be?

Ellen: Certainly not multiculturalism, because that's an issue that is in the forefront. But I don't know, maybe going back to basics, much more a focus on the classics, and the

canon of western literature, for example. The Great Books approach to learning as opposed to looking at folklore which is really coming from the people, from a much less lofty and higher echelon of socioeconomic status.

Steve: What do you like best about being executive director of the Society?

Ellen: I like being able to be in the place where I look at the trends, and that's happening nationally. The New York Folklore Society, because we're a state organization, but not a governmental state organization, but because we are the New York folklore society we actually in several ways represent New York state. There are similar organizations in other states. I like being in the position where I can see what's happening nationally, but also see what's happening within our state, and try to figure out what the trends are and where we can as a service organization develop programs that assist and help people in their work, whatever that is. For example, we're working right now to put together a forum on immigrant and ethnic artists in the state. There are lots of issues with immigration right now. We had a forum in Brooklyn, we're doing another one in Syracuse to really bring together people who work with immigrants and know those immigration issues and how it's affecting their lives, their art, and their ability to do art, and get people together to talk about what kind of solutions we can come up with. I like the activist part of things.

Steve: That sounds like it leads right to my next question of what are the greatest challenges in your position directing the New York Folklore Society?

Ellen: The greatest challenge for any non-profit is financial. At this point we operate with a lot of grant support, and some earned income. That's our biggest challenge, probably for me, is to keep an organization solvent and running and vibrant. Also, marketing and getting the word out. That's the other biggest issue, is to get the New York Folklore Society known. We're sort of a niche, and to find out where that niche is and to get our word out to people who really are interested, that's the other biggest challenge.

Steve: Does your journal *Voices* bring in some income? I know it's tied to membership, but is that a significant portion?

Ellen: Yes, I think so, it is. If you say the membership the journal subscription, then it is a significant part of our operating budget.

Steve: How do you see the future of *Voices*? Is it a healthy future?

Ellen: I think so. We certainly have no scarcity of articles. We're never in the position since *Voices* started in 2000 of looking at an issue, and saying "Oh, no, we have holes in that." So that's a good thing. We always have enough material, and we certainly see our

subscription base growing. That's the other good thing. So yes, I see it as a healthy publication.

Steve: Excellent. Is there anything you'd like add? Any comments on anything we haven't discussed yet?

Ellen: No, I don't think so. Well, actually, I can just say we welcome writing. When we celebrated our 60th anniversary last year, we had a whole issue devoted to writing, and we had a conference about it. If anybody is listening to this and would like to submit to us, we welcome submissions all the time.

Steve: Very good. Thank you, Ellen.

Ellen: Sure, thank you.

Steve: To become a member of the New York Folklore Society and receive your own subscription to Voices, you may send a check for \$35 payable to the New York Folklore Society, P.O. Box 764, Schenectady, NY 12301. As mentioned at the top of our show, the Society's web site at <http://www.nyfolklore.org> contains a wealth of information about folklore and the Society. Many thanks to Ellen McHale for taking the time to visit with me. Thank you for listening to Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

2: *New York State Conservationist*

Interview with Editor David Nelson, October 2006

Our program today is about the magazine *New York State Conservationist*. This glossy, colorful bimonthly magazine is an official publication of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Quoting from the Contributor's Guide on their website:

<<http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dpae/cons/contribguide.html>>

"As an official publication of NYSDEC, *Conservationist* reflects and interprets the missions and goals of the department [NYSDEC] and New York State. Typical topics include fishing, hunting, natural history, nature viewing and all forms of outdoor recreation. Other topics will be considered if they relate to the natural, environmental, cultural or historical resources of New York State. *Conservationist* is not a scientific journal. It is intended for a lay audience. Our readers rely on this magazine for scientific accuracy; please be sure of your facts."

The New York State Conservationist began publication in 1946. In 1960, the title was changed to simply *Conservationist*. In 1995, it absorbed a periodical called *Wild in New York: Division of Fish and Wildlife newsletter* and the title was changed back to *New York State Conservationist*. However, many readers still think of it as *The Conservationist*.

Recent issues begin with messages from Governor George Pataki and Department of Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Denise Sheehan. Each issue has 32 richly illustrated pages. Articles are brief, and the photos and illustrations are often key sources of information. For example, a piece on the relationship Native Americans had with white-tailed deer features photographs of the tools described in the text. *Conservationist* articles provide the reader ample "if you want to know more" information. The article about Native American tools has sidebars with URLs for organizations involved with primitive tools and information about the Annual Stone Craftsmen's Show. The writing style of the articles is simple but with substance. It should be equally entertaining and informative to middle and high school students and to adults. Typical topics include encounters with specific flora and fauna of NY, travel opportunities, and conservation efforts. Recent issues have included features on animals of New York—lizards, snakes, woodcocks. Did you know a woodcock can eat its weight in worms each day?

Each issue includes 4 regular departments. "Rangers to the Rescue" recounts actual accounts of DEC Forest Rangers and their work. "On Patrol" does the same for Department of Environmental Conservation police, recounting stories of catching people illegally hunting, fishing, or otherwise harming the environment. There is a "News"

department. Finally, in "Letters" from readers, questions about wildlife are answered by experts.

Conservationist has no advertisements. The magazine's subscription price of \$12 a year includes a "Critters of New York" pocket guide. The web site for the magazine is <http://www.TheConservationist.org>.

To learn more about *New York State Conservationist*, my guest is editor David Nelson.

Steve: Welcome, David. In a nutshell, what is *New York State Conservationist* about?

David: Well the *Conservationist* is all about the outdoors and natural resources in New York State, so we feature articles on wildlife, birds, mammals, things that people are interested in about what they might see out their back door. Day hikes, activities, outdoor education, and also environmental topics, as well. Certainly the environment is on the forefront of many people throughout the northeast and throughout the country. As the official publication of the state Department of Environmental Conservation, we use the magazine to try and convey important messages about the department's programs and about the natural resources of New York State.

Steve: Who are your readers?

David: We have approximately 100,000 paid subscribers, and at least an equal number of secondary readers in schools and libraries throughout the country. We have more people obviously in New York State who are interested in New York state government and natural resources, but we do have subscribers in all 50 states, and in several foreign countries.

Steve: I noticed when I looked online in a resource called WorldCat, which is a catalog of catalogs, the *Conservationist* is in about a thousand libraries, which is an impressive number. What does that tell you about *Conservationist*?

David: We have a very strong and proud history. The magazine originally was published in the time of World War One, around 1917 to 1921 or thereabouts. It was digest size, and it had a period of not being published, and then was picked up again 1946, interestingly right after World War II, in the current format, which is magazine sized. It was black and white at the time, with a one color cover. It went to color about four years later, and since that time there really hasn't been much change in format. So we've been around a long time, we cover important topics, and topics that people are interested in. And especially in the sciences, I think there's an appeal to anyone who has an interest in what they might see out their window, or out their back door, and for that reason I think people are interested in having it available in schools and in libraries.

Steve: How did you come to be the editor of *Conservationist*?

David: Well, that's a really interesting story. I would've bet probably my last dollar that I wouldn't be sitting here today, or in the chair as editor. For myself, at once knowing from a very early age, that I was interested in wildlife biology, and in nature, it made it very easy for me to know how I would spend my career. On the other hand, it's a bit of an affliction, too. There was never any option to pursue anything else. So from the age of 3 or 4, literally, I was flipping rocks and looking at salamanders and identifying birds with bird field guides and that kind of thing. Fast forward a little bit to eventually getting a job with the Department of Environmental Conservation, which was a long term goal, as a biologist, and layering upon that being sort of late to the table in the sense that I was one of the last baby boomers. Many of the jobs that I was most interested in were already taken, and are still taken by those kinds of people who were a little bit older than I am. I had it in mind that I was going to be jumping out of helicopters and roping down moose and elk and chasing wolves with radio telemetry, and being the next L. David Mech. It turned out that, although I don't consider myself a very good writer, many biologists do not like that aspect of the work. They're more interested in being field biologists, and banding birds, and doing biological studies, and I naturally gravitated towards more and more writing. That led to a position with the Division of Fish and Wildlife in the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, where I wrote many of the press releases, and was a media relations person. Then when the job of editor of the *Conservationist* came open, it was a pretty natural fit at that point.

Steve: And when was that?

David: About six years ago, in 2000.

Steve: What's your favorite part of the job?

David: My favorite part of the job is the mail bag, no question about it. We get some tremendous mail. If I could just digress for a second...

Steve: Sure!

David: I brought along a couple of things that, just to give you an example of the kinds of mail we receive.

Steve: Oh great!

David: Here's one I received just last week, and just to show you I'm not pulling out the best of the best, this a hand written letter from a little boy named Quinn Sherwood, and it's interesting, some letters are capital, and some are small, and he says, "My grandpa gives me his magazine when he is done reading it. I love all the pictures, the lizards and snakes are great. Please send me *Frogs and Toads of New York State*." And then here's a

typewritten note from another reader that said, “This is just a note to tell you that the October issue was the greatest. Every article screamed for my attention, and it was a challenge to decide which one to read first, and then next, and next. Congratulations to you and your staff. Keep up the good work.” Anybody, I think, would appreciate getting that kind of feedback.

Steve: Sure.

David: Of course they’re not always quite so complimentary. But again, mail bag is fun. People will send us leaves for identification, animal scat for identification, photographs of what they’ve seen in their back yard.

Steve: And you include those sometimes in the letters section of the magazine?

David: We do, and you know it....

Steve: Not the scat, the photos...

David: [laughs] It’s a fairly light part of the magazine. On the other hand, I get the feeling it is perhaps some of the most read parts of the magazine. People are very interested to see what their neighbors saw out their back door, and oftentimes someone will send us a photograph of a fox or a deer that they’ve seen, maybe an albino animal that they’re interested to know how it became that way. Sometimes they’ll ask us behavioral questions, too. That’s fun, going through that information. Unfortunately, at my level I don’t spend a lot of time, as you can imagine, doing that particular work. But I do ask my staff to come forward and show me some of these more fun examples from time to time.

Steve: Maybe we could digress and you could address the mountain lion question.

David: Yes! While we don’t have a breeding population of mountain lions in New York State, people do report sightings of mountain lions from time to time. Sometimes these are quite reputable sightings. By and large, for the most part, what people think are mountain lions are not. They are fishers, they are bobcat, they’re some other kind of predatory animal with which people are not familiar, or perhaps did not get a very good look at it. We do have biologists and technicians across the state who will go out and research some of the sightings. But they’re not ghosts. If they were out there, they would be getting hit by cars, they would be seen by people with good cameras and recording equipment, and we would get better evidence of them. So I don’t believe that there are mountain lions living in New York state, other than an occasional released captive. There’s an interesting group of wild animal trade. Sometimes an animal that looks cute and cuddly when it’s little but grows beyond someone’s ability to care for it. If they are

released, then certainly they will be seen by others, especially in the case of an animal that has grown more accustomed to people.

Steve: I see. I know that's a story that's been on the cover of the *Times Union*, the local Albany paper, and of interest to a lot of people.

David: Everyone has an opinion about these wolves, and coyotes, and mountain lions. Right now we don't have mountain lions in New York, but you know it's interesting, I do keep abreast of what's going on in the rest of the country, and they are moving East. They did occur here historically, and they're probably on a slow migration back from western states, toward the East. They have been seen, for example, in South Dakota, Iowa, and Arkansas, I believe. But that's still a long way from New York.

Steve: So back being editor of *Conservationist*. What are the biggest challenges of being editor?

David: I have a saying in the office, and that is, "I've gotta get a magazine out." Just as soon as a magazine hits the mail stream, obviously there's a quick breath, a sigh, and then we move on to the next one. In fact, we're already working on the next one before the last one hits the mail. The production schedule is reasonably demanding, it's every other month, so we do have a reasonable schedule. But given some of the other things that people who work for the state are involved with, and doing, we don't have the kinds of richness of time to really focus as would be appreciated. You see, I have a Blackberry, I check my e-mail at home, I'm constantly hooked up, cell phones, the job is very demanding. Largely that's based on a production schedule. We have people who are paying customers for a product, and we have to make sure that they get their product, that they're happy with the product, and that they get the product on time. I'm very happy to report that we have made our production schedule throughout my entire time as editor. And sometimes that's quite a challenge. We have bidding processes that force us to use low bidders. For example, we have had printers in the past, I'm happy to say we don't have that problem now, who were going bankrupt, and we had difficulties in getting the product out in time. So there are a multitude of challenges in producing a quality product every two months.

Steve: I can imagine. Who are your writers?

David: We have a variety of people. We use internal DEC engineers and scientists from time to time to talk about their programs. I'll give you an example. The Department is right now sitting on the heels of a big agreement on the cleanup of Onondaga Lake, with Honeywell Corporation. There's going to be a large announcement soon about an agreement on what will be done to remedy Onondaga Lake, and the substrate underneath the lake. We talk to folks within our agency to help us tell that story, environmental engineers, water scientists, those kinds of folks. We also use freelance authors, people

who have written books, people who write columns for magazines or newspapers. We also have stringers. We have people who are outdoor writers who know the kinds of information that I'd like to see, and in a format I'd like to see it in. In fact, there are some outdoor writers that I work with, and have worked with for years and years, and have never met, which is quite a statement about the times, I believe. But they develop an appreciation for what I need, and in the format I need it in, and they're able to give me a package that I can work with. So we use a variety of writers.

Steve: There's a very clear style of the magazine. It's easily read, but substantive. How difficult is it to maintain a style of writing for the magazine as a whole? It seems relatively consistent when I read the issues.

David: Well that of course is the difficulty of my job. As an editor, you want to take someone's draft and put it into the style and format that you need without them noticing. So hopefully the author's voice comes through in their essays and in their articles. This is sometimes easier said than done. We have articles that come in all across the board, some of which we just reject out of hand, they're not written well enough. Others, you can just about do a dance when you open the envelope. You read an article, and you say, "Aha! I have found someone who can write! Maybe they've never written before, but they understand how to make something interesting to the public. I'm thrilled to get in touch with that person and say, 'You've made my day, this is going to be a great article, and we'd love to run it'." The magazine is produced many, many months in advance. We have stories scheduled through 2007, 2008. Obviously, the further out you get, the more of a moving target that is. From time to time articles are removed at the last minute, and we have to scramble to put something else in, but for the most part we can predict for going forward what's going to be in any issue for at least two or three issues, four to six months in advance.

Steve: That's excellent that you have the content to do that, because of course that's an important piece of keeping on a schedule. Some scholarly journals have difficulty for that reason.

David: We have an eighteen page "story list" I call it, which is kind of funny, it's really just a list of ideas, in one sense. The closer you get to publication, of course, those ideas have to turn into real articles. But they may be articles that we have in our files that we need to work on. We are limited by real estate. We only have a 32 page magazine, so there are many more who are interested in getting their stories told through the *Conservationist* than we have place and time to put them in. So we are limited the size of the publication.

Steve: Let's talk about that limit of thirty-two pages. Why thirty-two pages?

David: Well, this is something, another saying we have in the office is “they didn’t cover that in Natural Resources 101.” I went to college for natural resource management. I learned a lot about birds and wildlife and forestry and those kinds of things, and nothing about magazine production, as you can imagine. The printing industry, and especially I’ll talk about the offset web press printing industry, is all done by printing two sides of the piece of paper, and then folding it. So for that reason, everything is done in factors of two, or powers of two. We can’t produce a one page piece of paper, because the other side of it would be blank. So in most instances, if something is going to be handled as a document unto itself, we’re talking about a two page article. A page I’m defining as an 8.5 by 11 piece of paper. So text and pictures on both sides would be a two-pager. You go from that to a four, obviously you wouldn’t have a three, because you’d have a blank sheet. Then you go from a four to an eight, and then eight to a sixteen, and sixteen to a thirty-two and so on. This is for economy. You wouldn’t want to buy paper, cut it off, and throw it away, or buy paper, not print something on it, and then send it out. The absolute best you can do for offset web printing is either an eight, or a sixteen, or a thirty-two page document, in terms of economy, with the least waste possible. There are a couple of corollaries to that, but I would probably bore people to sleep. We have a cover that goes around our 32-page document, so someone looking at the magazine may call it a 36-page document. And you can put in what the industry calls signatures of any of those beginning with four pages, any of those length articles. You can add a four, add an eight, add a sixteen. And in fact, some of our printers do two 16 page signatures to create a 32 page magazine. Then they’re stapled down the spine, and that creates your 32-pager. But again you couldn’t put a two pager in there because it would simply fall out. So over the years, looking at ways to save money, we have gone to a 32 page book, as it were. Paper is about half the cost of the magazine, so that’s why that’s so important.

Steve: Well that leads to my next question. The subscription price to the *Conservationist* is only \$12 a year, which is a relatively low price, especially for a magazine with no advertising. I’m interested to know how *Conservationist* has set that price, what policies go into that, and maintaining it when the printing cost is fully half of that.

David: Yeah, it’s an interesting question. We consider the magazine to be an important medium to convey environmental and natural resource messages to a wide audience, the official publication of the Department. So for that reason, we don’t look at it as a profit making entity. In fact, it probably couldn’t be so. There’s a reason that business is business and government is government, and if you’re working in government, it’s very difficult to “turn a profit.” So we try to keep the price at a level that allows the masses of people who are interested in this product to be able to purchase it easily. At the same time, they are literally subsidizing our ability to share important environmental education messages with a wide audience. The magazine does not make money, we don’t pursue advertising. In fact, we lose a little money each year. But when you consider that 100,000

people a year are actually helping us share those messages, it's a very inexpensive way for the government to share those messages.

Steve: I want to ask a picky librarian question. In OCLC, which is the database librarians to use for the bibliographic records of journals and books, *Conservationist* has gone through a few name changes since 1946. In 1960, the title went officially from *New York State Conservationist* to *The Conservationist*. Then in 1995, New York was added back into the title. In your mind, is it really an official title change, or has it been the same magazine the whole time?

David: Oh, I think it's been the same magazine all along. Paperwork we're required to file with the U.S. Library of Congress probably shows the evolution of those names, those various names, but they're just an annoyance to me. I would love to call it *The Conservationist*, because I think it's very important and important historically. On the other hand, there are several other states who have similar publications, and many of those are called *Conservationist*, for example *Iowa Conservationist*, *Louisiana Conservationist*. So it probably makes sense to call it the *New York State Conservationist*.

Steve: To distinguish it from the others.

David: Yes.

Steve: I see. I want to go back to the question of the content and the Department of Environmental Conservation's goals. What are some of the most important or urgent issues that you cover in the *Conservationist*?

David: Well, I would say probably the most important are the global and far-reaching environmental messages that we cover. What's going on with air quality in our country. What's going on with the regulations that affect emissions into the airs, and into the waters that surround us. We have, for example, an article that is scheduled for production soon that talks about mercury. It was a fascinating journey for me to work with a scientist in one of the department's divisions, who talked about mercury cleanups at schools. She came back with images of pure mercury in crocks that someone might make wine in, ceramic crocks labeled "mercury" on the outside, and these were from local schools. Elemental mercury that is out there in the environment that is not protected very well, mercury in thermometers, mercury in hygrometers, and in blood pressure instruments. These are very important issues facing all of our public health and safety. On the other hand, they are sometimes not as interesting reading as something about mountain lions, or something about wolves, or coyotes. So we have to make a mix of those environmental stories, and make them important and germane to our readers, and what a homeowner can do with the mercury they have in their own household, and how they can dispose of toxic and hazardous materials, while at the same time keeping their interest by talking about hummingbirds, or wildflowers, or fall foliage, that kind of thing.

Steve: The web site for the magazine, www.theconservationist.org, has the tables of contents from the magazine from 2005, and a few of the full articles, but many of the articles are not online. Why is that?

David: We're struggling with this right now, so you've made a very good observation. The entire digital medium has sort of rocked the world of print media. Newspapers and magazines across the globe are struggling with how to deal with electronic information conveyance. We feel that we want people to still subscribe the magazine itself, it's hard to snuggle up with a laptop. We are interested in having a web presence to entice people to purchase our magazine, but like many other magazines and newspapers out there, we haven't yet reached a balance of exactly how much information we're going to post online versus having it available only in the magazine. This is a very timely topic. On the way in this morning, I was thinking along the lines of how do we provide perhaps additional content on the web for subscribers, in a way that maybe a *Sports Illustrated* does. If you are a subscriber, you can go to the *SI* web site and read articles that may not appear in the printed publication. But we have gone back and forth a little bit on that. We have included some articles on the web in full that are about topics that perhaps affect public safety, like poison ivy. We want everyone to know how to avoid getting poison ivy, and what to do if you contact it. On the other hand, we may use just a little teaser for an article, and say "subscribe here if you want the entire article." Then a person can go to our subscription page and subscribe. We feel that our price is very reasonable, and we'd like to have that person commit to buying the magazine for an entire year.

Steve: Do you see continuing a print magazine for the foreseeable future?

David: Yes, I do. I do. You know, here I am at the end of the baby boomers, late to the table again, I'm finding myself in a similar situation where a few years ago I signed on to a print medium that is under siege right now by the internet. On the other hand, I think all of us remember how the video industry was going to kill the movie theaters, and no one would have that option any more. There will be some times of change going forward. We may enjoy a smaller subscribership than we have in the past. But at the end of the day, people are very interested in their magazine, they're very loyal. They call us if they don't get it. They want us to know that they're very interested in what we have to say, and they really like the *Conservationist*.

Steve: Well David, thank you very much for joining us today. It's been a very interesting interview.

David: Thank you, Steve.

Steve: If you would like to subscribe to *New York State Conservationist*, you may send a check for \$12 to The Conservationist, NYSDEC, P.O. Box 1500, Latham, NY, 12110. The web site is www.theconservationist.org. Links at the top of the magazine's web page

lead to extensive information about the New York Department of Conservation and its activities. Thank you for listening to Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

3: *Film & History*

Interview with Deborah Carmichael, Associate Editor, October 2007

This installment of Periodical Radio is about *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies*. This semi-annual scholarly publication of the Historians Film Committee publishes research on the depiction of history in film and the impact of film on history. The journal's content is described as follows on their web site, www.filmandhistory.org :

Film & History often contains the following types of articles:

1. Analysis of individual films and/or television programs from a historical perspective; viewing the films or programs as historical artifacts,
2. Survey of documents related to the production of films, how films move from initial ideas to the finished screen version,
3. Analysis of history as explored through film, as in using film critically in the classroom.

They also describe, and I see from the issues I've reviewed, that films examined in *Film & History* may be documentaries or features. A recent issue includes articles on the historical inaccuracy of medieval arms and armor in contemporary film, the depiction of the Alamo in film, teachers' use of the movies *Glory* and *Amistad* to teach history, and the role of movies in the antiwar debate in the 1930's. Each issue begins with a message of several pages from the editor about news of the organization, including conferences, awards, and members' accomplishments. The last third or so of the journal is devoted to reviews of films and books.

Each issue of *Film & History* runs about 90 pages, and is printed in black & white on heavy white paper. Covers are of colored card stock and feature illustrations depicting the theme of the issue. Recent themes include War, Sports, and Latin America. Every issue includes advertisements for scholarly books, and notices of upcoming conferences.

Film & History is indexed in *America: History & Life*. Articles from the journal are available in full text in several databases, including Project MUSE, EBSCOhost's Communications and Mass Media Complete, and ProQuest 5000.

The publishers of *Film & History* have an interesting way of dealing with manuscripts that do not fit within the pages of the journal. Each year they publish a CD-ROM containing refereed and approved articles beyond those published in the journal.

To learn more about *Film & History*, I have as my guest Associate Editor Deborah Carmichael, a professor in the Department of English at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, OK.

Steve: Deborah, welcome to Periodical Radio.

Dr. Carmichael: Well, thank you.

Steve: In a nutshell, what is *Film & History* about?

Dr. Carmichael: We're about a lot of things, it's hard to do a nutshell. Our main goal is get information, scholarship out to an audience of film students, film scholars, historians, students of American culture and other cultural studies. We do it through the journal and through some electronic publications, as well.

Steve: *Film & History* is interdisciplinary. Which disciplines are represented in the pages of your journal?

Dr. Carmichael: In addition to historians and film students, we get contributions from authors in sociology, psychology, cultural studies, women's studies. A wide variety, really. Obviously film touches our lives in so many ways, as does television.

Steve: I was going to ask "Who are your readers?" and that in a way answers that question. But are all of your readers academics, or does the journal reach a broader audience?

Dr. Carmichael: In addition to the academic audience we do have subscribers who are actually in the film industry. They can reference some of the articles and get some inspiration for ideas and areas that they might want to explore in terms of screenplays, for instance.

Steve: Who are your writers?

Dr. Carmichael: We receive submissions from scholars all around the world. We have quite a large number of international authors, all over the globe, really.

Steve: At the top of the show, I quoted from the journal's web site to describe the types of articles published in *Film & History*. Could you give us an example of viewing a film as a historical artifact?

Dr. Carmichael: Okay, I'll give you an example of some of our thematic issues.

Steve: Okay.

Dr. Carmichael: Each year we focus on a particular theme, and often times it is a historical era. For instance, we looked at the medieval period in film, which is something that may not readily come to mind. We received a lot of articles that talked about international cinema, ways Joan of Arc has been represented on film, ways in which King Arthur, someone we're all very familiar with, and grown up with different stories about him, and ways to look at how film has represented those figures, those stories.

Steve: How about an example of how a film is produced?

Dr. Carmichael: Produced meaning?

Steve: The process of creating a film.

Dr. Carmichael: We look more to the film itself, as opposed to the production. We do have some contributors who will be looking at film history in terms of the studio system, for instance. When the films were controlled pretty much solely by the studios, they controlled production, distribution and an exhibition. So we do get some film historians who would be speaking to that kind of topic.

Steve: I see, the process of production the films. How about an example of using film in the classroom?

Dr. Carmichael: Actually we'd love to have more contributors who give us information about how they use film in the classroom, but we try to include as often as possible articles that do address the idea of pedagogy in terms of film use in classrooms. For example, we had an article on *The Natural*, and the author described how using that film was a way to get a class of mainly young men to start thinking in terms of some of the ideas she was trying to work with in terms of cultural studies. It was a film about baseball, they could immediately relate to the concepts she was trying to work with in her class.

Steve: You teach film studies at Oklahoma State, is that correct?

Dr. Carmichael: I've taught mainly introduction to film.

Steve: Do you use films in your classes?

Dr. Carmichael: Yes, for sure. I have used film in literature classes, for instance. I'm in the English department here. I use lots of film in literature classes, some films in composition classes and of course obviously in introduction to film. That class is important because it's a good first step in getting undergraduates to understand film language and technique and the way that the director and cinematographer have made choices in how we see this story that's being told. There are deliberate choices in terms of whether we something in close up versus something in long shot, for instance. So it's a

way for students to begin to evaluate what they see. Obviously we're becoming more and more a visual culture, with film on the internet, for instance. So it's becoming more and more important for undergraduates in particular to start learning there is a language, and there are techniques that are affecting what we're seeing and how we're going to respond to what we see.

Steve: I'd like to ask a basic question about terminology. Why is the term "film" used, rather than "cinema" or "movies" or "motion pictures"?

Dr. Carmichael: They're all interchangeable, really. Can I tell you why the journal was originally titled *Film & History* versus "Cinema and History"?

Steve: Certainly.

Dr. Carmichael: I don't have any answer for that, actually. So they can be used interchangeably. Sometimes if you hear motion pictures it may suggest a more industrial perspective rather than a more analytical film textual kind of approach.

Steve: But they're essentially synonyms.

Dr. Carmichael: Sure, yes.

Steve: Deborah, I'd like to ask a few questions about your work as an associate editor of *Film & History*. What originally drew you to film studies?

Dr. Carmichael: Like a lot of people, probably just a love of film. As I started doing course work here at Oklahoma State I realized that I had the possibility to study not only literature but also film. Because I had that opportunity to study with people like Peter Rollins, who's our editor-in-chief of *Film & History*, and also people like Leonard Leff who has published a lot of work in film. So I had the opportunity to study with people who were particularly knowledgeable and particularly exciting to study with.

Steve: My next question was how did you land a position as associate editor? It sounds that might have been an outgrowth of those relationships.

Dr. Carmichael: Yes, that's exactly right. Because I had worked with Dr. Rollins in course work, out of that grew my opportunity to start working with the journal. I started working with him in 1999, so it's been a few years now.

Steve: Just what does an associate editor do, as opposed to an editor-in-chief?

Dr. Carmichael: The editor-in-chief is responsible for all the workings of the journal, to some extent. My role in particular is to review the submission we receive, to coordinate the peer reviews that go on for those, and then as journal is going through the process of

formatting and going to press, I'm the liaison between the graphics people, the printer, and things like that.

Steve: Can you talk a little bit more about that process of choosing the peer reviewers, that process of how you choose them and what they do?

Dr. Carmichael: For the journal we are thematic, so of course the first thing is we get hundreds of submissions so we have to at least temporarily set aside those that aren't working within the theme we've chosen for the year. We usually have a guest editor who helps work with the peer review process, and then later with the editing process for the actual print journal. In addition to that, because we get some articles that are excellent but aren't appropriate to the theme, or perhaps are on a theme we just don't have the physical space to print them all, we began a CD-ROM series. Obviously on CD-ROM we don't have those kinds of space limitations we do in print. So it was a way for us to again give authors the opportunity to get their work out so that researchers and students have an opportunity to see the material, even though it didn't fit within our thematic range of the print version. That's why we began our CD-ROM series in 1999.

Steve: And that's an annual?

Dr. Carmichael: We have a series we try to get out annually. In truth we're not right on the button in terms of getting out what's in a year, depending on technical problems and time constraints. Most of our staff are volunteer, so things don't always go as scheduled.

Steve: I was curious about something about the CD-ROM. It's a somewhat unusual way of a journal dealing with worthy manuscripts that don't fit within the pages of the journal. The journal itself is indexed in America: History & Life, a leading index for history. Are the articles on the CD-ROM indexed there, as well?

Dr. Carmichael: Personally, I don't have an answer for that, because it's not something I deal with, in terms of who we're indexed with and who we're not.

Steve: Okay.

Dr. Carmichael: The main goal is we want authors to have an opportunity to find a venue to publish, and this is a way we can do it without the kinds of space limitations of a print journal. There are usually twenty to thirty articles in each CD-ROM we put out. A plus to all this is someone doing research on a specific topic, a specific director, for instance, has the opportunity to do a word search through all of the documents on the CD-ROM, which is similar to the first CD-ROM we worked with, which was the first 26 years of the journal. Again, someone who's searching for a very specific topic or director can word search twenty-six years of the journal. That's an added plus in terms of people

trying to do research and looking for very specific references to particular films, for instance.

Steve: It sounds like a wonderful tool, but libraries seem to have a problem dealing with it. I was looking in WorldCat, which is a catalog of catalogs, and noticed that over 300 libraries subscribe to your journal, but only 10 libraries are listed as having your CD-ROM. Apparently libraries don't know quite how to deal with it. Do you perceive that as a problem that should be addressed?

Dr. Carmichael: I'm not savvy in terms of library science. My only experience is here at OSU, and the CD-ROMs are cataloged and kept with other media like microfilm, microfiche, DVDs, VHS. So there's a specific department that deals with electronic resources. I can't speak to it as a problem. It's obviously a new approach, so as time goes on and people are more comfortable with using it, I think that may be a part of it, in terms of use of the library, it's certainly a way to grab the attention of your undergraduate students, because it is an electronic resource as opposed to a hard copy resource. The word searchable capabilities come into play in terms of being able to search numerous articles.

Steve: A little bit earlier you mentioned that you have to rely on volunteer work. I wanted to ask a couple of questions about associate editors and the editorial advisory board. What compensation, or what reward is there for the people when they do that work?

Dr. Carmichael: The reward is we're getting that information out to an audience. We're not doing this in terms of trying to make a fortune at this. Our goal is to get good, solid film studies out there so people who are doing research, and people who are studying film and TV and media are able to have access to this information.

Steve: I think many people don't realize that the editors of scholarly journals typically aren't paid.

Dr. Carmichael: Again I can't speak to other journals. For us it's definitely a labor of love.

Steve: Some critics of the peer review process have said that work, that labor of love, isn't compensated enough, especially in the rank and tenure process. Do you think that criticism is valid, in your opinion?

Dr. Carmichael: I'm not sure if I understand your question.

Steve: That in the rank and tenure process, academic promotion, that reviewing articles doesn't count for as much as it should, given the importance of the work, and the energy that goes into it.

Dr. Carmichael: Hmm. Truthfully, it's not something I've ever fully thought about, basically because it's something you do because you want to get the information out there. I know that for instance our loyal people who contribute book reviews and film reviews, I know some of those are discounted as not being particularly good scholarship. But again, they're helping get the word out about what's available in film studies or media studies. So it's a way of getting information out to an audience that needs to be aware of what's available.

Steve: Very well. I can see the labor of love part is a very important piece.

Dr. Carmichael: Definitely, yes. You have to be passionate about what you're doing, because obviously academics don't make large salaries, generally. So certainly have to be passionate and love what you're doing.

Steve: I noticed that the content of *Film & History* seems closely tied to the presentations at the Historian Film Committee's conferences. Can you describe for us the relationship between the journal and the conferences?

Dr. Carmichael: The Film and History League, which is an umbrella for the journal and our other projects, sponsors biannual conferences. Out of the conferences we start first by producing CD proceedings. Then those who participated in a conference submit articles to us for the journal. In addition to people who have attended the conference, we take submissions from others who for whatever reason did not attend, and consider those as well for the journal. But because we have a pool of authors at the conference, it's a very good way for us to get out the call that we'll be doing issues on the topics of the conferences, based on things we feel are important to be discussed in film studies.

Steve: And you have a conference coming up very soon?

Dr. Carmichael: Yes, starting November 8 [2006] in Dallas, on the documentary tradition, which obviously can cover a lot of ground. About five hundred participants are coming to that conference. About a third of those are international participants, which is always exciting. The topics we used in the past, for instance "The American Presidency" or "The American West," although the topic may be American, because we have so many international contributors, we had the chance to get a new perspective on how our American West or western genre is perceived in other countries. It's a good opportunity to find different views and takes on different genres, or in this case this year the documentary tradition.

Steve: Of the conference themes over the years, do you have a personal favorite?

Dr. Carmichael: No, I can't say that I do, because they've all been fabulous. We always draw such a large attendance, and scholars who are senior scholars as well as younger

people who are just getting started in film studies. The quality of presentations is always so good that every conference is very exciting. It's also a conference where you have a chance to sit down and speak with people working in areas you're interested in. It's very collegial. I've enjoyed them all.

Steve: Sounds very enjoyable. The American Historical Society established the John E. O'Connor Film Award in 1993. Who was John E. O'Connor?

Dr. Carmichael: We didn't really go into the history, did we?

Steve: No.

Dr. Carmichael: John E. O'Connor and Martin Jackson are two historians who started *Film & History* in 1970, so there is a long history. In honor of all the work that John has done in film studies, in television studies, his work as a historian using film in the classroom, he was honored with the award from AHA.

Steve: What is the award, and how is it granted?

Dr. Carmichael: There's a committee that screens films to decide who will receive the award. John O'Connor's focus was on film and the use of history, how history is reflected or represented in film, how film can affect perceptions of history, and how film changes in terms of historic moments, as well.

Steve: So the award goes to a film maker?

Dr. Carmichael: Yes.

Steve: *Film & History* has been published for 36 years now, do you see it thriving into the future?

Dr. Carmichael: I think so, and I think part of it will be in terms of the kinds of things we're exploring in electronic publication. We've been doing the CDs. The last CD we did included some film on the CD, so people who may not have access to some of the classic documentaries, for instance, would have a chance to see it because of the CD. On our last CD-ROM we had *The Plow that Broke the Plains*, a film that was sponsored by the federal government, and might not be available, so it gives people a chance to see it. We also had another film on the last CD, *Goodbye, Billy: America Goes to War* from 1917. Again, a film that was distributed for classroom use, not distributed theatrically, something many people have not had an opportunity to see. But it's an excellent example of using archival materials to create film. Those kinds of opportunities where we can get film that people may not have access to out in electronic form along with the articles. On our web site, we have projects going on. We're working on a filmography now for documentary films to tie in with our conference. We have Keith Wheelock, who's taking

on that project for us. We'll have an extensive, fairly detailed filmography on documentary film. So we're providing resources through the web site, as well, for film scholars. There are lots of different avenues, I think.

Steve: Looking into a crystal ball, do you think the journal will still be published on paper ten, twenty years from now?

Dr. Carmichael: I guess my crystal ball is cloudy. It would depend upon the demand from our subscribers and our readers. Do they prefer the print copy? Do they prefer something electronic online? A lot will depend upon what our readership really wants.

Steve: I see. I think all of our crystal balls are cloudy on that one.

Dr. Carmichael: Yes [laughs].

Steve: Deborah, is there anything that we haven't addressed that you'd to add?

Dr. Carmichael: One thing I hope is that people will take a look at our web site at <http://filmandhistory.org>, so they can see a little more about the kinds of things we do in addition to publishing the journal. We have events like our conferences, we have teachers on the web site, like the filmography we're working on. We have a lot of different projects going on at any one time, all of which hopefully are going to help people doing research in film, looking at film in terms of how it relates to our culture. We can be a help to them and their work.

Steve: Do those web resources require a subscription, or are they free to the public?

Dr. Carmichael: The filmography and things like that are just on the web site for anyone to use.

Steve: Deborah, thank you very much for being our guest on Periodical Radio.

Dr. Carmichael: Thank you, I've enjoyed the opportunity to speak with you.

Steve: To explore *Film & History* on your own, visit their web site at www.filmandhistory.org. That's "and" spelled a-n-d, not an ampersand. If you would like to subscribe to *Film & History*, an individual subscription is \$50. The address is Popular Culture Center, RR 3, Box 80, Cleveland, OK 74020. Thank you for listening to this installment of Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

4: *Film History*

Interview with Richard Koszarski, Editor-in-Chief, October 2006

This installment of Periodical Radio is about *Film History: An International Journal*, a quarterly scholarly journal published jointly by Indiana University Press and John Libby Publishing. *Film History* publishes research on the historical development of motion pictures in the context of society, technology, and the economy. To quote from the journal's statement of aims and scope, *Film History*'s content "ranges from the technical and entrepreneurial innovations of early and pre-cinema experiments, through all aspects of the production, distribution, exhibition and reception of commercial and non-commercial motion pictures."

Most issues of *Film History* are devoted to a single theme. Recent themes include film museums, women and the silent screen, 1927, local film, and the intriguingly titled "Unfashionable, Overlooked or Under Estimated." Each issue begins with an introduction, which I found myself drawn to in order to learn why 1927 was worthy as a theme, or what the term "local film" means. The provocative first line of the introduction to the 1927 theme is, "This issue is dedicated to saving 1927 from *The Jazz Singer*." Apparently the first talkie was not the only significant accomplishment that year. And I learn that local films shot in a community and shown in only that community were often funded by local cinema owners to boost attendance.

Each issue of *Film History* runs approximately 130 pages. As is typical with scholarly journals, each volume begins with page one and pagination continues through the volume. So issue 2 may begin with page 130, issue 3 with page 260, and so on, so page numbers run through the full volume as they do in a book. *Film History* is printed in black & white on high quality glossy white paper. The sharply printed text is divided in two columns. Many articles include illustrations from films, old advertisements, or historical photographs. These are reproduced as crisply as the originals allow.

Film History is indexed in *America: History & Life*, and articles from the journal are available in several full text databases, including Project MUSE, EBSCOhost's Communications and Mass Media Complete, InfoTrac OneFile, and ProQuest 5000.

The subscription price for *Film History* is \$175 for libraries, and \$70 for individuals. Price differentials for libraries and individuals are typical for scholarly journals.

To learn more about *Film History*, I have as my guest Editor-in-Chief Richard Koszarski, associate professor in the Department of English at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey.

Steve: Richard, welcome to Periodical Radio.

Dr. Koszarski: Thank you, glad to be here.

Steve: In a nutshell, what is *Film History* about?

Dr. Koszarski: Anyone can turn to the back of the journal where we have our Aims and Scope. For many years we've published our scope as being the historical development of motion pictures within their social and technological and economic context, which means that it's not a journal devoted to old films, or reusable films. It uses films themselves as entry points into the history of this medium. So we've never published reviews of *Citizen Kane*, or a review of a movie like *Sunrise* or *The Battleship Potemkin*. But often articles either bouncing off those films, or going through those films to discuss larger issues which affect the entire movie image industry in many different ways.

Steve: I'd like to ask a basic question about terminology. Why is the term "film" used, rather than "cinema" or "movies" or "motion pictures"?

Dr. Koszarski: That goes back to where the journal came from. In 1985 I was approached by some people who were working with Taylor & Francis, who were publishing *History of Photography*. They said we'd like you to edit a journal for us called "History of Film." I said the title "History of film" doesn't [sound right], so we flipped it around and called it *Film History*. The suggestion I guess was theirs. Of course it's neater than "motion pictures." I think it was simply shorter for them. "Motion pictures" already in the 1980's seemed to be too limited to photochemical based media, as opposed to electronic media or what we now think of as nineteenth century pre-cinema media. "History of Cinema" would have sounded maybe a little too Continental. I think they wanted something that was going to seem a little punchier, and a little more American, actually. So we wound up with *Film History*, and film history is a term that pops up a lot in the literature, including in the titles of books. We were there early, I guess, with that.

Steve: Each issue of *Film History* addresses a theme. How do you choose the themes?

Dr. Koszarski: We have a group of associate editors, and these editors include people from all over the world. We have people like Steven Bottomore who's an independent historian living in Thailand (he'd been living in London), John Fullerton from Stockholm, Janet Bergstrom from UCLA, and also John Belton and Daniel Leab who teach here in New Jersey, where I do. Each of these editors is sort of given the responsibility to locate a theme. What are you interested in, what do you want to work on? If you look over a year or two of the journal, sometimes there are issues that aren't edited by these people, or somebody gets to do two issues. We are also amenable to being

approached with suggestions from the outside for particular issues. We have an issue now that's going to press that will be edited by Charles Musser, who's an early cinema specialist. He wanted to do something on documentary film in the 1920's and 1930's. We've been working with him, and that's coming along very well. It should be out by the end of the year. Then there's another category. We accept papers submitted that are off topic. Somebody sends me a paper, and it's a wonderful piece of work, I can't say there's really not anything coming up on this field, I'll just have to toss it back. So we can do one of two things with that. We can add it on to an issue that maybe has a little space, because after all these are magazine issues, they're not anthologies. So we have a little flexibility there. Or we can gather them together if we see we're beginning to have a shape emerging from the submissions. This is not surprising, because people tend to be interested in writing about the same things. There are waves of interest over time. These can coalesce and form an issue. We did this recently. You mentioned to me earlier our issue on overlooked and unknown topics.

Steve: Yes, I believe the exact title was "Unfashionable, Overlooked or Under Estimated." Tell us about what was in that issue.

Dr. Koszarski: That's not in front of me, but the issue is one of these assortments of papers that have come in over a year. I'll look at the papers and think this is really nice, can I hold on to this and see if we have some space? When more things come in I can either say, here are some nice things that came in over the transom, or from what's available there which has not been solicited. This has only happened once or twice, but there may be something linking all this material, off the point of many of the obvious suspects in terms of film history research. What I have to do, then, is write an introduction which justifies it and explains it.

Steve: I read your introduction to that issue. There's also an article in that issue you wrote about the 1918 flu pandemic. I found it very interesting. Could you tell our listeners a little about that flu outbreak and how it affected the motion picture industry?

Dr. Koszarski: At the end of the first World War, there is an epidemic or pandemic of what they called Spanish Influenza. This epidemic of Spanish Influenza begins apparently in the United States, moves to England with the troops we're sending over there, then winds up sweeping around the world and comes back to the United States in 1918. I had been reading books about the flu epidemic that had been published in the last half dozen years. It's not coincidental that these books are written under the shadow of the looming bird flu epidemic. Lots of people are writing about this. I'm thinking, didn't this have some impact in motion pictures? There were one or two anecdotes you'd encounter in someone's autobiography about how we had to wear flu masks when we made that film. So why don't I hear more about this, especially if it was going to such an extent that entire towns were being closed down, or were closing down their businesses. I

began researching it, possibly with the idea of doing a book. I may still do a book on this topic. I said let's go and drill a sample hole in one journal. The journal we looked at was *Moving Picture World*, which is easy to access. The journal is basically devoted to the exhibitors, and talks more about theaters and what's going on in towns across the country as opposed to what's happening inside the studios. By going through the *Moving Picture Worlds* for this period and simply reprinting excerpts in chronological order of a selection of the hundreds of pieces that the World published over four or five months, I was able to chart the flow of this epidemic from the east coast from where it started in Boston through when it expired in winter 1918/1919 on the west coast. As this epidemic progressed, you could see that initially the theater owners felt very patriotic, as they had been during the war raising money for war bonds, said yes, we will close this week because the epidemic is here. Then the epidemic would last longer, go on two weeks, three, four weeks you have to have your theater closed. Some began to suffer financially, terribly. In the motion picture industry if you don't get someone's money that day, they're not going to come back next month. If you need a pair of shoes, you can delay a week or two buying, but movies are an instantaneous purchase. So every week these theaters are closed, they basically lose that revenue. At first you find theater folks responding by making common cause with other institutions that have been closed, such as saloons, and in some places churches. Some municipalities ordered theaters, saloons, and churches closed. Department stores, usually not. Transportation lines, usually not. Sometimes in some towns saloons would be allowed to be open but churches would be closed. So you have reason for all sorts of people to be making common cause and complaining about irrational application. Eventually, by the end of 1918, some theater owners are going to court and they are about to bring what would have been precedent making legal actions against the ability of the government, even in time of war or emergency, to put them arbitrarily out of business. These cases were moot as the epidemic expired, and were never adjudicated. But what I thought was interesting here, is maybe bird flu will be coming, and what are we going to do about, well in our case in the movie industry business, are the movie theaters going to cooperate the way they initially did, or will we see a legal bloodbath as it looked was about to happen at the end of 1918?

Steve: Richard, I'd like to ask you a few questions about the job as editor-in-chief of *Film History*. How did you become editor-in-chief?

Dr. Koszarski: In 1985 I was approached by a publisher working with Taylor & Francis, a large journal publisher, to begin work on this magazine they wanted to be a brother of their *History of Photography*. We began developing this journal which became *Film History*. There were problems initially, because history of photography, if you look at the articles and the editorial board, is tied largely to museums, libraries, archives and collectors. Those are the main people who are supporting that historical work in the medium. In the movie business, the film scholarship doesn't work that way. In fact there

were no real film museums in 1985 in the way you have several around the world today. You had archives and libraries that had some material. Collectors of movies did not operate the way collectors of photographs did. There was no art market for motion picture prints, and what historical work was being done by 1980 was not coming from the academy. I graduated with my doctorate from NYU in cinema studies in 1977, and I wrote on a historical topic. Already by the late 1970's and early 1980's most of the energy at NYU's cinema department was in critical theory. People there weren't terribly interested in the historical context of different works that they were analyzing using various theoretical yardsticks. So a large part of that energy was going into theory and criticism. What work was being done on the history of film was coming from well trained amateurs, people like Kevin Brownlow, the filmmaker and film historian who was responsible to turning attention to silent films in a major way for the first time in many, many years. So I thought what I would do with this journal is link this type of bridge between the academy, using a "rigorous" academic context, rhetorical context on one hand and also looking at film as a medium with traditions and with cultural roots. This direction at that time was largely being done by independent historians. So we established a board which included people from all areas, from universities, independent historians, and curators at archives and museums, to bring them together and form an approach to the history of film, that wasn't either the theoretical, analytical perspective you might have gotten from a university or one of these "here's the guy who invented the first sprocket hole," and letters wrangling about minutia of technological developments. I went to the Society for Cinema Studies conference and gave a little outline of the journal, and from the back of the room there was a woman who exclaimed, "At last! An empirical journal!" I thought, you've got it, you have it.

Steve: Richard, earlier in our interview you described a little bit about what the associate editors do, and you just mentioned the editorial advisory board that you established. Can you describe for our listeners, for a scholarly journal such as yours, just what does the editorial advisory board do?

Dr. Koszarski: It differed over time. When we were initially published by Taylor & Francis, for the first five years, the advisory board, which is rather large, were being barraged by me on a regular basis with solicitations for papers and ideas, please look at this. It proved to be somewhat unwieldy, which is why when the journal was taken over by John Libby publishing after five or six years, we extracted from that a smaller group of associate editors. The associate editors and myself each independently have the responsibility to create an issue. I know in other journals you have a group of five or six editors and they sort of thrash out among themselves the content of every issue, so that each of them is individually satisfied. I didn't know that would lead to the most interesting journal in our field. So while there is an overall direction for whoever gets

selected, once they are in charge of an issue it's as if they're running their own magazine within the context of *Film History*.

Steve: So they're essentially guest editors for that issue?

Dr. Koszarski: They are the editors. They're not guest editors, because a guest editor would have less authority or presence with the journal. These are people who keep coming back over and over again, so their personality and interests and perspectives will be engrained in the journal from that point on. Otherwise it would largely be my personality, which I guess would be okay for me, but this is a more interesting way of broadening out the appeal and range of areas of interest that the journal can cover.

Steve: How are the associate editors and advisory board members compensated for their time and energy on the journal?

Dr. Koszarski: Well, they get subscriptions. There is a small fee for the editing of an issue. But this is largely a labor of love for the editors, as it is for the subscribers.

Steve: Some critics of the peer review process for scholarly journals in general, I don't mean *Film History*, this is in general, have claimed that the work of editing a journal and being on the board is not sufficiently compensated for the amount of time and energy that goes into it, specifically for rank and tenure in academic positions. Do you think that criticism valid?

Dr. Koszarski: What do you mean by compensated, you mean financially?

Steve: No, not financially, just as a return in the rank and tenure process at whatever institution they're working at.

Dr. Koszarski: It really depends on the institution, I think. Obviously I think they should be rewarded tremendously, not only financially but in terms of respect and credit. Yes, is in your tenure packet having edited a 175-page journal issue given the same weight as having edited a 175-page book? Maybe not. But on the other hand, the packet will usually include a sample of the work you've been doing, so I would hope those who are reviewing your publication history would be able to take that into account.

Steve: Richard, before we close I'd like to give you an opportunity to address aspects of *Film History* I've not asked you about. Is there anything you would like to add?

Dr. Koszarski: In terms of the journal or in terms development of the medium itself?

Steve: Your choice.

Dr. Koszarski: Well maybe we can talk about the two of them simultaneously. As I mentioned, by 1980 there was very little historical work being done in graduate cinema

departments, at least in this country. That has changed over time. Theory has--I don't want to say theory has proven a dead end--but people who used to do only theoretical work are now writing for us. The change happened through the 1980's and 1990's largely because of an increase in library and university resources, specifically large corporate and private paper collections which were deposited in places like the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Hoblitzelle Theater collection in Texas, and UCLA. These collections, some of which had arrived a few years earlier, were finally processed and graduate students began to discover them. They began to understand that you can see inside the walls of those Hollywood studios in the 1920's and 1930's, what was going on behind the scenes in production companies. Discussing the beginnings of motion picture history did not have to be limited to looking at a movie projected on a screen and trying to write about that, or going through some old trade papers. Now there was the opportunity to look behind the public façade and see how this art industry actually operated. In the 1990's there is a complete split, a complete change in the direction of the most creative energy in film studies towards new kinds of historical inquiry. It was a wonderful coincidence that we were here with this journal at the time that happened. I can see it in the submissions over the last twenty years.

Steve: Richard Koszarski, thank you very much for being my guest on Periodical Radio.

Dr. Koszarski: Oh, it was great to talk to you. Thank you for asking.

Steve: You're very welcome. If you are interested in subscribing to *Film History: An International Journal*, go to Indiana University Press's web site. The URL is <http://iupjournals.org/filmhistory>. Be aware that there is a web site titled "Film History" that is not affiliated with the journal. Thank you for listening to this installment of Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

5—*Documentary*

Interview with Thomas White, Editor, October 2006

This installment of Periodical Radio is about *Documentary*, the member's magazine of the International Documentary Association. According to their web site at documentary.org, "The mission of the International Documentary Association is to promote nonfiction film and video around the world by doing three things:

1. Support and recognize the efforts of documentary film and video makers,
2. Increase public appreciation and demand for the documentary,
3. Provide a forum for documentary makers, their supporters and suppliers."

Documentary is a glossy magazine printed in full color eight times a year. It's published monthly, except for four combined issues. Serials librarians call the schedule the "publication pattern." It's important to librarians, because we need to know when issues are expected to arrive. A pattern with combined issues like *Documentary*'s is a bit of a challenge, but a complex pattern is okay as long as the publisher makes it clear and sticks to it.

Each issue of *Documentary* runs roughly 60 pages and features about 10 articles. Most articles are 3 to 4 pages long. Regular departments include messages from the association president and the editor, a news section, and member news. Advertisements for services of interest to documentary filmmakers take up about a quarter of the pages, including a few pages of classified ads at the back. Articles in *Documentary* address all stages of the filmmaking process. Topics include how particular films were made, how films are distributed, film festivals, and awards. As I browse through issues, I see a particular emphasis on film festivals and awards.

Documentary changed its name from *International Documentary* in December 2005. However, their web site and the magazine itself still sometimes refers to it as "International Documentary". It is indexed in *Film Literature Index*. As best as I am able to determine, it is not available in any full-text databases.

To learn more about *Documentary*, my guest is the Editor, Tom White.

Steve: Tom, welcome to Periodical Radio.

Tom: Thank you very much, good to be here.

Steve: In the introduction to our show, I quoted the mission of the International Documentary Association. How does your magazine promote the mission of the Association?

Tom: The mission of the association is to promote documentary film, to help documentary film makers, to really make the world safe for democracy, for documentaries as it were. You really have to provide opportunities, and IDA does that through screenings, workshops, awards programs, outreach programs, seminars, and also through the magazine. The magazine functions as a communications device. What I try to do with the magazine is to try to be on top of the documentary world, but really also cover the past of it, and also the present and the future. We look at various trends in the art form, looking at directions, issues that impact the art form, etc. We're a communications tool and in conjunction with that we're trying to enhance our web site to be kind of a complementary device, so the whole communications infrastructure will include the magazine, but also the web site. I'm developing content for that in the form of our e-newsletter to be more timely in terms of documentaries that are coming out on certain dates, or reporting on festivals, and things like that. The e-newsletter or e-blasts or e-zine is kind of an extension of the magazine, in the spirit of that.

Steve: So they complement one another.

Tom: Yes. But the magazine's been around as long as the IDA has been around. Next year the IDA will celebrate it's 25th anniversary. The magazine started in a very modest fashion as a two page Xeroxed newsletter. Certainly it's evolved since then, it went to a quarterly to a semi-monthly. Right now we're coming out eight times a year. We used to come out 10 times a year. Next year it will be seven times a year. As we build our presence on the web and building that complementary infrastructure we're cutting back a bit on print. For everybody in the print world, printing magazines or newspapers has become a bit more expensive. So we're all looking for ways to utilize the web in a creative way, while keeping the magazine and the spirit of the magazine.

Steve: Who are your readers?

Tom: Our readers are primarily documentary filmmakers, of course, but we also have educators and people in the business side of the documentary industry, the distributors, exhibitors, commissioning editors, etc. Again, I mentioned academics and educators, and then of course aficionados of the documentary. I think the highest percentage of our readership is documentary film makers, both emerging and established.

Steve: What are the most important or pressing issues facing your readers? You mentioned something about the future of documentary filmmaking.

Tom: I think it's really getting your documentary made. I mean, there's making your documentary, having the passion to follow a story and bring it to audiences. Getting your documentary made is more the business side of it, getting it funded, raising money for it, finding a home for it. I think the web and the digital revolution over the last ten to twelve years has created a lot of opportunities, but it's also created a lot of challenges. But it's really getting your documentary seen, being creative about it. I mean there's I think again part of the opportunities have been proliferation of festivals. That's certainly a way to get things seen, but also opportunities on the web with video sharing, selling your DVDs online, etc. I think the challenge is really, once you finish your documentary, how you're going to get it out to the audiences, and how you're going to get it finished and pay for it. Those are things that we try to explore.

Steve: I suppose it's easy enough to make a documentary available on the web if you don't mind giving it away for free.

Tom: Well, I think that's where you need that sort of acumen, to not give it away for free necessarily, but I think I would encourage documentary makers to set up their own web site. So many of us have broadband access, and so many of us live on the web, that's a way to really define your film. You're constantly selling you film to get it to the next level, to sell it to distributors and exhibitors and commissioning editors. Finding places for it in theaters, on cable or PBS or networks and international markets, and in festivals, of course, and in DVD in the education market. With a web site, it's probably a good idea to have a trailer at least to give people a sense of what your film looks like, and what it's about. If you retain the rights on your own web site, that's a way, in so doing, to force you to become the middle man. So you have to develop a marketing savvy, to say who is your core audience, what are the web sites out there where I can reach that core audience, and really try to take the aggressive role of marketer and distributor for your own work. You are your best sales person for your own work. You know what it's about, you know who to reach, so when you retain the rights to sell your own work you're also thinking about the appropriate theatrical distributors and the appropriate venues, whether in cable or PBS or networks. You have to think about those audiences, too. I think making your documentary for free, well a lot of people, certainly on YouTube there is a wild frontier, and in other file sharing web sites. There are a lot of documentaries available for free unbeknownst to the filmmakers, I believe. But I think the digital revolution has created a lot of opportunities for doc makers to follow the whole process themselves, self distribute and also work with the other key players to reach audiences out there as well.

Steve: Who are your writers for *Documentary*?

Tom: Our writers, unfortunately we're not able to pay our writers, but we do pay them with a complimentary subscription and membership to IDA, but that aside, a lot of writers are film makers. I've been fortunate, because they have a certain in to that

experience of film making. A fair number are educators, teachers at the college and university level. I am fortunate to have journalists. There's a wide variety of writers.

Steve: Tom, how did you land the job of editor?

Tom: I think I go back to my English major roots in undergrad in the late 70's and early 80's. I did take a few film courses, one of which was actually in documentary and American television. I retained all the textbooks from that course, and I use them to this day. But I really had no idea, as no one really does when they graduate from college where they really want to go into. But I was in performing arts management and resource development, living in New York and working at Lincoln Center and Brooklyn Academy of Music, and also going to a lot of films, and a lot of documentaries. So a sort of school of hard knocks in New York. I came out to Los Angeles in 1987 to pursue an MBA with a focus on arts and non-profit management at UCLA. Then I worked at the L.A. Opera for about three years, then went out on my own. One of my first clients was IDA, so documentary was never far from my realm of art forms that I have a passion about, so it's always stuck with me. I worked with IDA primarily at first as a grant writer and development consultant, but I did want to expand my portfolio a bit, so I started to write for their magazine, and wrote for other magazines, like *Independent Film and Video Weekly*, *Hollywood Reporter*, *Variety*, *Indie Wire*, and *Release Print*. About ten years ago, in 1996, I became assistant editor of the magazine, then worked my way up and became editor in June 2000. So that's how that happened.

Steve: What do you like best about the job of being editor?

Tom: I think it's just being...working with writers, working with film makers, but also it's a very creative job. I like the idea that for each issue we try to have a theme. We develop ideas for articles around that theme, and so try to create an issue that is as comprehensive and cohesive and creative as our limited budget will allow. That's what I like about it. I also work at home. All my staff are independent contractors in kind of a unique 21st century model. I've always liked writing, and I like the idea of hammering an article into a presentable and acceptable and pleasing form. The end product, you know you start out in flux, as an idea, then a series of ideas, and you work with the writers, then the articles come in and you hammer and work with your staff, and the end product is hopefully a product of lasting value.

Steve: In your "Fast Forward" introduction to each issue of *Documentary*, you close with "yours in actuality."

Tom: Uh-huh.

Steve: Why that closing?

Tom: I think when I first wrote that column, I wanted to come up with something appropriate to the magazine and documentary. In Europe, particularly in England, documentaries within the non-fiction media universe, actualities are part of that. I guess an alternative would be “documentarily yours.” “Yours in actuality” is just kind of part and parcel with the non-fiction community that we’re serving.

Steve: I see. As I browse through the issues we subscribe to here at the College of Saint Rose of *Documentary*, I noticed that there was quite an emphasis on film festivals. Why are festivals such an important component of documentary film making?

Tom: I don’t know if we necessarily emphasize film festivals, but we certainly cover them. I feel that it’s important to cover them. I think in the past fifteen years, festivals have played a vital role in giving documentaries a high profile, and attracting distributors and potential partners to help further the life of the documentary. In a way festivals have also played a role in test driving the documentary in front of audiences to gauge what they respond to, what they like about the film. It’s also to really interact with the audience. You don’t get that kind of opportunity when you have your film airing on television or on cable, or playing in the theaters. We can’t cover every film. From our standpoint, we can’t cover every film that comes out, and there are so many documentaries that come out, this is a way we can highlight some of them and serve the community as much as we can. I think festivals play a vital role in furthering the life of the documentary, and we’ve seen a few documentary-only festivals pop up over the past ten years or so. I think that’s great for the art form. It’s a way to give back, and when I cover festivals, for me personally it’s a way to really scout out what’s coming down the pike. It’s also not just the films that are screened there, but also the people who go there and participate in panels and workshops and seminars and things like that. It gives people a sense of what’s in the air, what’s coming up, some of the issues and trends that seem to be impacting the form and the industry. It’s important to continue to cover festivals, but there are so many we can’t cover them all, but we try to hit the important ones, and occasionally some of the regional ones.

Steve: Could you talk a little bit about the role of awards in documentary film making, and what some of the most important awards are?

Tom: Obviously the Academy Awards, certainly that’s a great honor to be nominated and to win an Oscar. But Emmys, Peabodys, and DuPonts are certainly very prestigious honors as well. I should say myself the IDA Awards. Those were created to celebrate the art form, to give back to the community. When IDA was first formed, within the first couple of years of life the people who founded it decided it’s important to have documentary awards. There really aren’t enough out there. Awards help careers. Give film makers a certain cachet to put on their CV or resume, and really help gain funding or support for the next project.

Steve: Thank you. In December 2005, your magazine changed its name from *International Documentary* to *Documentary*. Why the change?

Tom: That was a board decision. It was also suggested by our distributor that perhaps “international” had a pejorative aspect to it, that folks in the United States would misconstrue that perhaps we were only covering non-domestic documentaries, which was not true, but it’s actually important. We do cover international issues and international documentaries, and we’re the International Documentary Association, but to eliminate the word international really focused on the art form itself. It was documentary whether it was international or domestic. That was the reason behind it, to position the magazine in a different way in news stands and book stores and festivals as a magazine about the art form and in some ways about the industry.

Steve: I wanted to ask a couple of questions about the readership. I was noticing your circulation and had a couple of questions about it. First of all, for the benefit of our listeners, like all magazines each year you print your Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation in one of the issue. I’ve not addressed this in a previous radio show. Could you just explain for our listeners what that form is and why it’s required?

Tom: The form is something we file with the Post Office. It’s required just to show that we are not a dormant publication. It’s to be accountable, how many issues we print, where they go to, how many we keep on hand, how many go to subscribers and members, and how many go to news stands and book stores, and how many we distribute for free. We do send a certain number to festivals and markets. A number of other of my contemporaries in the non-profit media arts world also send their magazines, and the for-profit media arts publications. You go to the prominent festivals and you’ll see a whole slew of magazines on display there. It’s a marketing tool. That’s why we fill out that form every year.

Steve: And that’s required to get the special periodical postage rate?

Tom: That’s right, the non-profit rate.

Steve: When I was looking at the form, there were a couple of things that struck me. One of the things is “in county” and “out of county”. I noticed about half of the membership was within county, which I assumed to be Los Angeles County.

Tom: Um-hum.

Steve: For some reason I would have thought that documentary film makers would be more widely distributed, and not half in Los Angeles County.

Tom: The bulk of our membership is from Los Angeles County, or southern California I should say, mainly because that's where we're headquartered. We do try to partner with various organizations around the country. We have had workshops and seminars in New York and Washington D.C. and Chicago and other places when we can, several times over the course of the year. Our awards galas are in Los Angeles, and the screening of the award winning films are in Los Angeles. Our Docuweek, which is a showcase for qualifying documentaries for consideration for the Academy Award, takes place in Los Angeles or New York. We send a number of those films on an eight city tour, so we are trying to serve the Academy's qualifications, but also building our presence in other places around the country. Because we're based here, and we have a lot of screenings here, but in other places, that's where a good portion of our membership is.

Steve: I'd like to bring us back to a topic at the very beginning of the interview, and that's the future of the magazine, specifically the magazine as a print publication. You spoke of how you're expanding the web presence and using the timeliness of that. Do you see a future for the print magazine, 5, 10 years from now?

Tom: I do. I don't think the print magazine is going to go away. Print magazines are being born every month. But I think it's important to think of it as a hybrid. That's kind of the future of it. Print magazines will still be around five years from now. It's the portability, it's saving the magazines for future use, archiving it. The best zines on the web have been around for a while, because they've known how to utilize the web. It's different from a magazine. There's more dimensionality, it's a bit more versatile. By the same token, they certainly have archival capabilities, too. But there is a little bit of the ephemeral aspect of a web based publication. It's a matter of perception, and how we're conditioned to engage in the print media versus the electronic media. We're just conditioned in the print media that there's a little more of a lasting value, or at least less of an ephemeral aspect to it. But I think that will change. All print publications, whether newspapers, dailies, monthlies, semimonthlies, need to be thinking about utilizing both the print medium and the electronic medium, and really enhancing both, using each medium to enhance each other.

Steve: Tom, is there anything I haven't address that you'd like to tell us about *Documentary*.

Tom: You focused on the coverage of festivals, and I mentioned that, but I do want to say that we do try to cover as much as we can in other areas of documentary, and try to be as versatile and dynamic as possible. Whether we're covering education, or emerging and evolving platforms, or looking at various regions. This past year we looked at the Washington, D.C. region. We looked at New York City the year before. In other publications we've looked at regions around the world, not as a special issue, but in various articles. We try to look at the documentary community as a whole and look at

various aspects of it and highlight things. The core of our mission as a magazine is service, being of service to the documentary community as much as we can. That's in concert with the IDA's mission. In developing the web as a complementary tool, it's really so we can be a bit more timely and that our service can improve somewhat. The bottom line for me is service to the community and I try not to waver from that.

Steve: Tom White, thank you very much for being my guest in Periodical Radio.

Tom: You're welcome. Thanks for the opportunity.

Steve: Have a good day. If you are interested in becoming a member of the International Documentary Association and receiving a subscription to *Documentary*, go to documentary.org and click on Become a Member. Individual memberships are \$85/year. Thank you for listening to this installment of Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

6: *American Diplomacy*

Interview with Dr. Henry E. Mattox, Editor, November 2006

The subject of our program is *American Diplomacy*, an online Open Access journal. Open Access journals have no charges to readers or libraries; they are free to all internet users. *American Diplomacy* is one of over 2000 journals provided for free and linked from the Directory of Open Access Journals at <http://doaj.org>.

American Diplomacy is published by [American Diplomacy Publishers](#), a not-for-profit organization based in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Their goal, and I quote, "is to publish thoughtful articles on international issues, to support efforts to strengthen the American Foreign Service, and to promote understanding of the challenges of diplomatic life abroad through the memoirs of U.S. Foreign Service personnel and their families. Among our contributors are American diplomats, both active and retired, as well as distinguished academicians."

The editors accept a broad range of content of interest to active and retired foreign affairs professionals, scholars, and the general public. Some articles are scholarly, some very personal. The research-based scholarly articles are submitted for evaluation by two or more outside readers known to be knowledgeable in the field. Evaluation by outside readers is known as "peer review," and is a defining characteristic of a scholarly journal.

The articles in *American Diplomacy* are clearly written and easy to understand by a non-specialist like myself. I found it quite interesting to read perspectives of people with first-hand knowledge of events I've read about in the news or seen on TV. While the journal is targeted toward the foreign service community, it should be of interest to anyone who cares about foreign affairs.

American Diplomacy presents an interesting case study in the organization of an online journal. Traditionally, journals are published in distinct volumes and issues, and articles have page numbers. In its first few years of publication, *American Diplomacy* organized content into volumes and issues in the traditional manner. Since 2005, the traditional organization was abandoned in favor of organizing in several ways--by year, geographic region, author, and department. Using multiple organization schemes is effective, and provides a clear advantage over traditional print-on-paper journals.

I found the journal's web site to be slightly cluttered, but still easy to navigate. The site is professional but not slick. Graphics are kept simple and informative, and the black or blue text on white background is easy to read. Bold red borders and limited use of pink backgrounds give the site a consistent look. A Google "search this site" block is included on many pages. Links back to the home page and departments are consistently provided throughout the site. All content from 1996 to the present is readily accessible.

My guest is retired foreign service officer Dr. Henry E. Mattox, Editor of *American Diplomacy*. Dr. Mattox co-founded the journal with Ambassador T. Frank Crigler in 1996.

Steve: Dr. Mattox, welcome to Periodical Radio. Can you tell me the story of how *American Diplomacy* began?

Dr. Mattox: You mentioned Ambassador Crigler's name [before we began the interview]. He and I and several other people were looking around at a time when we thought that perhaps the retired foreign service community in our area of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Raleigh, Durham could perhaps make a contribution in the understanding of foreign relations and the understanding of diplomacy and that sort of thing. Our part of North Carolina, called the triangle, which includes University of North Carolina and Duke University and North Carolina State University, plus several other colleges, has been some time well blessed retired people who have backgrounds in international affairs. Heavily represented among them are retired foreign service officers such as myself and such as Ambassador Crigler. We looked around, and thought about this and thought about that, how we might perhaps latch on to the burgeoning net system. One idea that was thrown out was perhaps we could respond to questions over the net. We had sort of a stable of retired people nearby we could call upon for information, for interpretation, and for elaboration of foreign policy problems or questions that came up. That didn't seem really to work out for one reason because when you're retired, you very soon get to be no longer *au courant*. You get to be sort of last year's expert and that sort of thing. Therefore I think perhaps it was I who suggested that we use what internet or electronic computer expertise we had (this was ten and a half years ago) and put out a journal. I was of course familiar to print journals, and as a matter of fact way back, many years ago, I'd helped put out a college journal. But journals of the normal sort have problems of production, printing and stock and costs of that sort of thing, and the cost of assembling it and stapling everything together, then distributing it all. All kinds of problems. But we investigated, and looked into it and discussed it. Ambassador Crigler was a good bit more knowledgeable about computers than I was, so therefore we thought perhaps we could put out a monthly journal, only it would be completely no print, no printing press, no pieces of paper, no covers, no nothing of that sort. We designed it, we put the whole thing together. The first issue was fairly slim, but nevertheless it included some reasonably interesting stuff. Then through the intercession and support of a colleague of mine at the University of North Carolina we were able to get access to the University of North Carolina computer system. This is for a running account, keeping an archive and getting access to the system out there in the world. So we put it all together with the cooperation of Professor Dick Kohn who was head of the Triangle University Security Seminar, and also history professor at UNC. Through his intercession, and through his support, we got out our first issue. It was just about getting out the first issue

of a college humor magazine, except it was all completely electronic. My colleague at the time, Ambassador Crigler, did the web master work. He was fairly knowledgeable about that. We got the first issue out, and then immediately started putting together material to put out another issue the following quarter. That's how we got started. The impetus came from the fact that this area of North Carolina where I live and work, and where I have lived and worked for 25, 26 years now, has a great number of retired foreign affairs people, including military and other agencies and so forth. The core all along has been retired foreign service officers, such as Crigler and myself.

Steve: Very well. You mentioned that the word "issues" in quotation marks as well as someone can use quotation marks around a word as they're speaking. I noticed that for the first five years of *American Diplomacy*, you did use volume and issue numbering, but then dropped that, and now organize the content differently, in multiple ways.

Dr. Mattox: Yes. I thought it was the first four years, but it may have been five years. We came to the point of realizing that we were just straight jacketing ourselves with my mental of print issues, print journals. There was simply no reason to do that, no reason whatever to hold everything up for three months, and then all at once change over to a new web page, and call it some new volume. We thought it would simply be obvious, and more flexible to put material up as it became available, and take material down as we decided perhaps it had been up long enough. It would be a continuing, ongoing process, and that's been the case since five or six years ago when we decided to do that. By that time we had put together a board of advisors, a board of governors. American Diplomacy Publishers, a North Carolina incorporated non-profit organization with a board of directors, originally about 15 or 16 people, now it's up to about 22 people. Many of the people on the board are retired foreign service, others are retired military, and still others remain in academia, and perhaps one or two people in the business world. They set policy guidelines, but not political policies, because we are apolitical in our approach to foreign affairs. Although I must say, people from time to time contribute articles that are pro intervention, anti intervention, or one thing or another. We entertain that sort of thing. I must say also that occasionally I write editorials that merge toward splenetic about one thing or another. But basically we are apolitical. Basically we are kept that way by the board of directors that came along and was organized. By the time we'd made this change over, the board of directors formally endorsed our change from a quarterly publication to an ongoing internet operation, where articles go up and down.

Steve: The librarian term for a web site that continually updates its content is what we call an integrating resource.

Dr. Mattox: Well I'm glad to know that, now we have a name for what we've been doing for the last five or six years.

Steve: There you go. I have a question about it being a free online journal, Dr. Mattox. Do you think *American Diplomacy* gets as much respect and recognition as it would if it were published as a regular print on paper journal?

Dr. Mattox: I think if not now already, I think it would within the near future, because things are changing so fast, that I do believe that most people of generations younger than mine think nothing of our not being printed on paper. In fact, I think the academic generations younger than mine, say 20 years younger than I, look upon web journals as being not particularly unusual. I don't think the fact they are free really has anything to do with it. I don't know, I'm just guessing now. We don't charge. It's up there if you want to look at. There's no way I know of, anyway, that we could plug into anybody's pocketbook anywhere along the line. We support ourselves through contributions by the board members, and by relatively modest support of two private foundations. So we have sufficient funds to cover basic out of pocket expenses of two or three or four members who are involved in turning out the journal, including myself. We pay on an hourly basis a contract webmaster, someone who we happened to have known for many years, and who has been in this region associated with North Carolina State University for many years. She takes care of the web mastering business, and I take care of the thrust of the articles and which articles we will present at what time and so forth. I have working with me a publisher who is retired foreign service. He and I served together fifty years ago, believe it or not. Anyway, I've known him for a very long time. He retired here without knowing anything about me being here, because it's an attractive place to retire. Here being the triangle area of North Carolina. We have two, three, or four associate editors who primarily are involved in deciding whether an over the transom submission is useful to us, or not. If so, if they recommend it and I okay it, then often I will ask them to go back through it and put it into whatever format or form that we find most useful that we rather insist upon here at *American Diplomacy*. We have another source, I'm getting off on another subject now . . .

Steve: That's all right.

Dr. Mattox: We have another source of articles, and that is reprints. the Foreign Policy Research Institute, for example, in Chicago I think it is, puts out really good material every once in a while. This is just one of the several such research outfits that are themselves free, that publish articles on this subject or that subject having to do with foreign affairs that we borrow from from time to time, with of course advance permission, and explicit permission from the organization. Of course we attribute the article to that organization. I wandered off somewhere.

Steve: That's fine, absolutely fine. Many of the things you mentioned addressed questions I was going to ask, so that's perfectly all right. Most of your writers are foreign service officers, or retired foreign service?

Dr. Mattox: Many of them. I don't know that we've ever sat down to decide just exactly how many are foreign service officers. We have people who are in the foreign affairs field. One that comes to mind right away is Admiral Stansfield Turner, you remember, who was CIA Director at one time. I ran into him at a conference, and I had a talk with him one time before about something else. I asked him to write something for us, and he did, very nicely. That sort of thing happens from time to time. We have academic people in this area and around and about who write for us from time to time, just over the transom. Except it's not exactly a surprise any more, we know people who write and send things in. Often we will use what they send in with only minimal editorializing. There's a U.S. Attorney in Pennsylvania who's been writing for us for five years, very interesting, in depth studies of one sort or another about historical U.S. foreign policy. I think he should have been a history professor rather than a U.S. Attorney. He should have gone to graduate school in history rather than law school. That seems to be the thing that interests him most. On the other hand, we have a lot of foreign service people who often take only a little bit of jogging from me to turn in something that's quite interesting. One of the members of the board is a Middle East specialist who goes back years and years and years, and he can be counted upon to grind out something thoughtful and interesting every quarter, an in depth article of some sort. We are one of his principle outlets for his expressions of opinion. We have people who write about the foreign service itself. This is an area, incidentally, we have found is one of the two areas of most interest our readers—foreign service--how you get in, how it operates, what it does, how you get out, with a great deal of emphasis on how to get into the foreign service. We have a whole section, as you may have noted, called "Foreign Service Life." People write about experiences they've had, the first post they had, how they took the exam, how they got shot at somewhere or another and that sort of thing. The other area that is of most interest is anything about the Middle East. This is not too surprising, I suppose.

Steve: So . . .

Dr. Mattox: Once again I got all wound up.

Steve: That's quite all right. One of the downsides I might think of not having a subscribed journal is you don't actually don't know who your readers are.

Dr. Mattox: Yes, we do.

Steve: You do?

Dr. Mattox: We don't know in detail, but we have tracking devices, tracking programs of some sort. We know how many people hit us, that is open the pages to read something or another. We know how many, and we have about twelve or fourteen hundred subscribers, who don't have to pay anything, they just subscribe and therefore they get a heads up from some kind of. . .

Steve: ...an e-mail alert.

Dr. Mattox: Yes, a long list of e-mail alerts, however it's done. Our publisher does that. He knows where these people come from, and where they're located by their e-mail addresses. Other than that, yes you're quite right, though, we don't know in detail who comes floating in over the transom and opens up an article and reads it and then goes away. We have no way of knowing that.

Steve: Do you have a sense of whether folks from other nations, not the United States, read your publication for insight into our foreign service?

Dr. Mattox: We do know that, we don't know in precise detail, but we have about 50 or 60 subscribers from overseas. They come from everywhere you can think of, from Russia on down, the Middle East, East Africa. I think he wrote down for me some, let me see if I can find it. Afghanistan, China, Russia, those are the only three he gave me, but there are about 50 different countries. We found out one time that, I don't know how it was done, exactly, that one of our subscribers was at the Russian embassy in Pakistan or somewhere. I don't know why the Russian embassy, but I guess it's rather obvious why they'd be interested in even informal statements of American foreign policy.

Steve: Do you have to be concerned about any classified information being revealed?

Dr. Mattox: No. We don't have access to, nor any inclination to write anything that's classified. Most of us are retired. Rarely do we publish anything from a foreign service officer on active duty, or a military officer on active duty. In those cases it might be that someone could slip up and reveal something or another, but I find it very unlikely. People who have access to classified information are rather careful with it, they certainly wouldn't just blather it out to *American Diplomacy*, an unclassified and perfectly open electronic journal available to everybody in the world.

Steve: I understand. Dr. Mattox, what have you enjoyed most about being the editor of *American Diplomacy*?

Dr. Mattox: It permits me to stay in touch with those who are most concerned and most thinking and most active in the foreign service community. I say "foreign service community" in sort of a broad aspect, because several members of the board are former military officers, and former academics. Some are retired academics, and some are active. It gives me a chance to stay in touch with waves of intellectual thoughts that go beyond reading the editorial pages of the local newspapers every day, or even reading the *Economist* or whatever. I get to involve myself in discussions with people who have submitted articles and if they're good I get in touch with them in that regard. If it's not so good, or if it's skimpy, I get in touch with them or I ask one of our assistant editors to get in touch with them. We discuss back and forth, and see whether we can improve it, or see

whether we can go to press with it, in a sense, right away if it's a good article. These editorial assistants, associate editors that I mentioned, all invariably are members of the board. If anyone can be charged with that kind of responsibility, to pass judgment on an article, they have the right to have the prestige of being on the board. The board doesn't get paid anything...

Steve: They not only are not paid, they actually contribute [money]?

Dr. Mattox: Yes, they contribute. We have board meetings once a quarter and everybody buys his own lunch.

Steve: Hm. so it's not a high budget operation.

Dr. Mattox: No.

Steve: I'm curious about this. Have you ever sat down and thought how much it would cost if everyone involved with your journal was paid the market rate for their labor?

Dr. Mattox: I have never even thought about approaching that question, no. We have publisher who I mentioned earlier. He's also the treasurer, which is an elected position. I was once the treasurer, a long time ago, as well as being vice president of the board and acting president of the board. I finally got rid of the treasurer business. But when I was the treasurer, it wasn't a very onerous job, because we didn't have any money. But now we have reasonably substantial income, so therefore we can cover most of our literally out of pocket expenses, plus the web site, the web master expenses. But I never thought about all these various sundry other people. It would be really something. I'll raise that with the treasurer next time I see him, but he will probably throw up his hands.

Steve: I bring it up simply because within the librarian community, there's a great deal of discussion nowadays about what we call Open Access journals, like *American Diplomacy*, that are freely available on the web to anyone with an internet connection. The debate is whether, in the long term, whether these types of journals are really sustainable. In other words, if you look 10, 20, 30 years out, for a journal whether relying on volunteer labor is sufficient or not. That's the debate within the librarian community. Obviously your journal is an example of running on dedicated individuals who volunteer their time and energy.

Dr. Mattox: Yes, and I don't know how long that would be sustainable, but I don't see any change in the near future. I don't see any switch over to people dropping out because they weren't being paid or anything of that sort. Most of the people...it's a specialized kind of community where I live in north central North Carolina, around all these big universities, in that there's an unusual number of retired foreign service, virtually all of them senior officers, all of them, I guess. Quite a few of them are retired ambassadors.

They are interested in the process of foreign relations and they're interested in the practice of foreign relations, and they retain that interest even though they're retired. Retirement doesn't make all that much difference. Therefore, I am lucky. I am favored. I've been the editor of this thing for a little over ten years now. I don't know how much longer I will wish to stay, but if I decide to step down, or if I'm asked to step down for whatever reason, there will be somebody here in this community who will be willing and able to take over.

Steve: That's excellent.

Dr. Mattox: I don't want to cast aspersions on any particular area, but if I had retired in south Mississippi where I grew up, and was the first one off to school, I would be in trouble trying to run this kind of operation. People don't retire in south Mississippi.

Steve: Well Dr. Mattox, I'm afraid our time is up. We do limit this show to about 30 minutes to fit into our program rotation. I thank you very much for being my guest. It's been fascinating.

Dr. Mattox: My pleasure.

Steve: If you would like to read *American Diplomacy*, it is available for free to anyone with a web connection. The URL is <http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/>. Thank you for listening to this installment of Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

7: *Adirondack Life*

Interview with Elizabeth “Betsy” Folwell, Creative Director

December 2006

The subject of our program is the regional magazine *Adirondack Life*. Regional magazines describe and promote life and recreation in a particular geographic area. The Adirondack Park was created by the State of New York in 1892. The Park encompasses approximately 6 million acres, nearly half of which is public land and is constitutionally protected to remain “forever wild” forest preserve. The remaining half of the Park is private land which includes settlements, farms, timber lands, businesses, homes, and camps. This mix of public and private land is essential to the character of the Adirondacks, and is reflected in the content of *Adirondack Life* magazine.

Adirondack Life's first issue was published in winter 1970. Before that it was a special section to a local newspaper published by Robert Hall, who went on to be editor of *The Conservationist*. *Adirondack Life* started as a quarterly, then was published bimonthly, and is now published in 8 issues a year. *Adirondack Life's* circulation is almost 50,000, with many subscribers in New York, but it has subscribers world wide.

This colorful, visually appealing magazine runs about 90 pages per issue. Articles are richly illustrated with colorful photographs. As one would expect, the magazine covers vacation destinations, upcoming events, regional history, and wildlife. But the content reaches beyond the expected. The December 2006 issue has articles about how very few people of color visit the Adirondacks, a cable TV channel that broadcasts continuous live video of a bridge, and an Elvis impersonator who plays Kirk in an amateur version of Star Trek. Advertisements for Adirondack style furniture and decorations, vacation opportunities, real estate, and other Adirondack-related goods and services fill many of the pages.

To learn more about *Adirondack Life*, my guest is the magazine’s Creative Director, Betsy Folwell.

Steve: Betsy, welcome to Periodical Radio. First, tell us what you do as creative director of *Adirondack Life*.

Betsy: Well at a lot of magazines creative director is involved in day to day things like photo shoots and managing how the magazine looks. I leave that up to the editors and the art director. My overview is really the whole creative side--the art director, the editors, advertising production, printing--everything that goes into the magazine that you see physically is under my supervision. So it’s kind of broader, and in other places the publisher does that, as well as circulation and the financing. But our management is such

that it's a three part team. The circulation director is part of the publishing team, and our controller is part of the publishing team. So we've divided up the work differently than it is at other magazines.

Steve: Betsy, in preparation for this show you described *Adirondack Life* to me as a "true 4-color magazine". Can you describe for us what that means, and what it takes to publish in color?

Betsy: Sure. I think that's what most people think of when they're thinking about *Adirondack Life*, is great photographs. That's really been our hallmark for more than twenty years, a long time. Luckily, there are a lot of people photographing the Adirondacks who are excellent—Nathan Farb, Carl Heilman, Mark Bowie, Nancy Battalia—I mean really there are just dozens of great photographers. There's a whole new generation of photographers coming up like Drew Haas and people who have taken their love of backcountry adventure, like backcountry skiing and hiking and canoeing and added photography to it. They're going a lot of places that other people haven't gone with good equipment. We're lucky in that regard. So producing a four color magazine means that we've encouraged color to exist on every single page, and that trickles down to advertising. We want our ads to look great, because prettier ads entice someone to buy a product. Tints and different colors, beautiful pictures, even if they're tiny, that's what we're looking for. The magazine is very visual, it's not like the *Economist*. Our goal is to make it something that people flip through. They're attracted because it's colorful and interesting and vivid, and then they start reading, because the headlines grab their attention, or they recognize an author's name, and they take it from there.

Steve: How has the work of preparing a 4-color magazine changed over the years?

Betsy: Oh my god, it's changed so drastically. The original *Adirondack Life* published in the 1970's was on stiff paper, and you'd recognize the sort of pebbly texture from newsletters of that era. In those days, if you wanted to print a photograph you had to send it to a company that did a separation from the transparency. They would create pieces of film in four different colors that if printed separately, like magenta ink, a cyan that's blue, and then a yellow ink, and black, those would make all colors of the rainbow, depending on what percentage of each ink is used. We don't do color separations any more. That whole process has become digitized. The same work is done as far as separating the colors, but it happens through a series of computers that are telling the printing press what color inks to squirt out. For the type side, in the old days, I mean in the old, old days, printers set each piece of type, every letter. Then there were linotype machines. Then there were things called compugraphic machines, which created this long roll of photographic paper that was basically photographs of type. Those would get covered with hot wax, and stuck to a board, and then photographed with an enormous stationary camera. Now it's all created on computers with desktop publishing. The whole thing of

moving text and pictures and illustrations and all that stuff around, that's just a matter of moving your cursor and your mouse. In the old days, you were using an Exacto knife and hot wax to create the same effect. A lot of the effects simply weren't possible.

Steve: That is quite the change. Computers have affected our work in many, many ways.

Betsy: Oh, yeah. Oh, golly, I'd say probably twelve years ago *Adirondack Life* had one Macintosh computer for desktop publishing. I cannot estimate how many computers we have in the building now. I mean, each editor has one, the art director has one, there are scanners everywhere, and different kinds proofing equipment. We create our own color proofs in house, and our scanner costs about as much as a new car. We're doing a lot of stuff in house that used to happen at a prepress house or at a print shop.

Steve: Are many of your photographers now going digital, are their original photographs in digital format?

Betsy: Many of them are. There's a real caveat to that. If you take your digital camera into the field, you have a viewfinder that's two by two inches. So some people are going to the extent of taking their laptops with them, so they're composing their picture on the laptop which is much bigger. But the files that they're creating, still most of them do not have the clarity of say a four by five transparency. If you look at the *Adirondack Life* calendar that uses pictures that are 11" by 13", a lot of those are larger format images that we're using. If you took a 35mm slide, the little guys, and blew that up to 11"x13", you're going out 1200%, so you're going to lose some detail. That's one of the problems with digital photography, is that not a lot of people have the extremely high end cameras that can file an image with that much information in it.

Steve: I see.

Betsy: Without getting too technical, there's a whole new movement in digital photography called RAW, which enables you to save a lot more details. But in the end you can manipulate a lot more aspects of the picture. But these files are massive, and hard to move around. You can't e-mail a raw picture of any size to your grandmother.

Steve: Because the file size is too large?

Betsy: Yes, just too darned big.

Steve: Betsy, what's your personal standard for a well produced issue of the magazine?

Betsy: We like to see a good geographic mix of stories. The Adirondack Park is big, it stretches from Lyon Mountain down to Old Forge and Cranberry Lake over to Lake George. There's a lot of territory in between, so we hope that there's a story or a picture

or something that appeals to people in different parts of the park, in every single issue. Sometimes that's hard. We are based in the high peaks. I live in Blue Mountain Lake, the bias tends to be towards the high peaks just because lots of great photography is coming out of there. So a geographic mix is a goal. The other thing is a real mix of stories, something you can do as a reader, whether it's a cross country ski trip or canoe trip or a place to go you hadn't thought of. A history piece, some kind of bit of local lore that is unknown even to people from close by. Profiles of interesting people. Little snapshots of a successful businesses that are making interesting Adirondack products. Some politics, some environmental news, some nature. All different things in the package. It's a conscious effort to bring in lots of different topics, because if we did only environmental issues, or political issues, we'd really bore an awful lot of people who come to the magazine looking for something they can do.

Steve: I certainly wasn't expecting the article about the Elvis impersonator who plays Kirk in an amateur Star Trek production.

Betsy: Well, hey, it's happening in an old car dealership outside Port Henry, and a lot of local people have thrown themselves into this project, and exporting it into the world.

Steve: That was a fun article.

Betsy: Yes, that was. For your listeners, I guess why don't you explain what you got out of it?

Steve: Well, one thinks of the Adirondacks as being wildlife and forever wild. I think that's what folks naturally think about first when they think of the Adirondacks. But I have been there enough to know there is a wide variety of activities going on, and people live there, it's their home, and they have a wide variety of interests, just like people in any other part of the country do. That was an interesting, offbeat story about things that people do in the Adirondacks.

Betsy: I never really watched Star Trek, but these are grown adults who are filming Star Trek episodes that they've written and produced. The production values are pretty good, and they have a full makeup studio, and they have costumes, and they have a mock bridge for the spaceship. It's really quite elaborate, and they're doing it because it's a project they love. It's kind of the next step in amateur theater, I guess.

Steve: Betsy, who are the readers of *Adirondack Life*?

Betsy: They are all over the place. First of all, we have readers in every state. But they are concentrated in New York and the northeast. Maybe ten or fifteen percent of our readers live year round in the Adirondacks, but lots of readers in Albany, Schenectady, the whole capital district, Syracuse, Buffalo, Rochester, also Manhattan, Long Island,

New Jersey so on and so forth. Mostly in the northeast. A few more men than women, like maybe 52% men. I think partly that's because a lot more men experience the Adirondacks as scouts or hiking, rafting, whatever they were doing with their buddies at a certain age. They kind of held on to that interest. The average reader age is just over 50, a very active 50. They tend to spend about a month of the year here. We do a reader survey every couple of years that's very exhaustive, and we ask people questions from "Did you buy a pair of binoculars this year?" to "What's your household income?" to "What are your favorite article topics?" Typically their favorite topics are history. One of their favorite sections of the magazine is that back page called "Our Towns," which profiles a different town in every issue. We try to get that feedback every couple of years just to make sure we're satisfying our core group of readers.

Steve: Who are your writers?

Betsy: Our writers are all over, too. Seriously, there are a handful who are in the Adirondacks who are also writing for newspapers or working for public radio stations. But for bigger topics that involve a lot more research, we seek out pros who may live in the Hudson Valley or Vermont, or even farther afield than that. There's no geographic restriction on where a writer lives, certainly, if they're willing to come here and do the research, that's great.

Steve: Do you ever accept unsolicited manuscripts?

Betsy: We see them all the time, and sometimes those are the happiest surprises of all. That's how we meet a lot of writers who come to write more regularly for us, just by sending in a really well done short piece. Our guidelines are available online if you go to <http://adirondacklife.com> you'll see on the left editorial guidelines, it's one of the links you can hit. That spells out what we're looking for. We don't publish poetry, we're not looking for articles less 900 words, and it really helps if people are familiar with the magazine. They can write a lovely story about, say, the Adirondack Blanket company, but gosh, that's in the current issue, so it pays to do your homework. We love to hear from writers who have a specific area of expertise, like someone who's only done profiles, or only written about botany, or whatever, to combine the skill of good writing with real knowledge of the science or social science or history. That's a huge plus. A lot of journalists are generalists, and someone with that extra bit of background knows where to find primary sources or how to seek out experts in the field and can get to them. Those are good things.

Steve: As a regional magazine, how does *Adirondack Life* reflect the character of the region?

Betsy: That's one of the things that we hope we do, but we're not always sure that we do it. For example, we could not do a September/October issue without showing a photo

feature of beautiful fall foliage. It's just expected. If it's not there, we intuitively know we've let people down. I've been here since 1989, so I've seen a lot of these fall foliage photo features, and it's like, "Oh, man, enough already." But this is what people want and expect. If they're living in Florida, they want to see fall foliage in the fall, even if it's on paper. So how does it reflect the region? Well we try to keep in mind that the Adirondacks is not one place. It is wild country, the forest preserve, it is towns, some interesting towns, and it's people doing everything from logging to goofing off doing a Star Trek movie. It's funny, I'm sure one of the complaints is we're not reflecting, you know, oh, the hardscrabble life that's here. But we don't want to project a picture that may be construed as demeaning, or condescending. That's a tough thing to do.

Steve: Sure. Betsy, you won an award from the International Regional Magazine Association for your "Short Carries" column. First, can you describe for our listeners what a "short carry" is?

Betsy: Oh, sure. Other people may call it a portage. It's when you have to carry your canoe from one body of water to the next. The editor's note in *Adirondack Life* has been called "Short Carries" for I don't know, I would say probably twenty-six, twenty-seven years. I didn't come up with the title of it. I've written really dozens of these columns. I think the IRMA, International Regional Magazine award I got in September was the sixth for that column.

Steve: Congratulations!

Betsy: Oh, thanks.

Steve: What the topics of some of those columns?

Betsy: I think that was my crime spree series, and not real typical but there had been some . . . well I wrote about arson, which turns out to have a long history up here. Getting rid of derelict hotels when they've outlived their usefulness. There's some sort of funny historical quotes about arson. More seriously, there were several buildings burned at the Adirondack League Club near Old Forge over the past few years. As yet, those cases haven't been solved. That was the news end of it, the recent arsons. The old bit is guess what, it's nothing new. Another crime was the theft of a really amazing weather vane from a church in Crown Point. It was a beautiful piece of folk art that was the angel Gabriel with a trumpet. What makes it special is the weather vane itself was made from local iron in a mine in town, and they knew which blacksmith had made it. A lot of times with folk art all that information is lost, but this had a really excellent pedigree. One night, somehow, somebody got up there and took it down, and had a really nasty looking plywood replica ready to go up, and I guess they got spooked and never put this plywood piece up. In the morning someone driving by saw this plywood thing and realized the staff holding the weather vane was gone. So that was another one. The other one in this

crime series was embezzlement, because there were several cases of embezzling against town governments and fire companies over last few years, just kind of a roundup of that kind of thing. But typically the columns are more evocative of a season, or of a place. How, for instance, Blue Mountain Lake when it's frozen turns into the village green, a place where people congregate that's no one's property, a great place to go on a sunny afternoon, and you'll find everybody out there doing all kinds of stuff, from ice fishing to skiing or walking dogs. A lot of the columns are just evocative of life here, trying to set a tone and capture a mood, to keep people interested if they're not in a place that has snow or ice or blackflies or beautiful sunsets.

Steve: Can you tell us a little about the International Regional Magazine Association that gave you that award—who are its members, what its purpose is?

Betsy: The International Regional Magazine Association has been around for more than 40 years. Members are magazines a lot of your listeners have heard of, like *Arizona Highways*, *Down East* from Maine, *Texas Parks and Wildlife*, *Oklahoma*, *Beautiful British Columbia*, *Salt Scapes*, which is the magazine for maritime Canada, *Chesapeake Bay*, *Vermont Life*, *North Carolina*. Really, many, many states, *Wisconsin Trails*, *Lake Country* in Minnesota, *Cottage Life* in Canada. Many states or regions have regional magazines to promote what they're up to. In a lot of states, the regional magazines are an arm of the tourism department, like in New Mexico. So these magazines get together once a year for a week long seminar with programs on how to boost your subscriptions, the latest technologies for PhotoShopping pictures, printing technologies, legal and copyright issues. It's a professional organization and the great thing about this group is we can share ideas freely without really competing for each other's readers and advertisers. In a lot of other professional organizations, yes, you can have a seminar. But once the seminar's over, people are scuffling for the same clients, and that's not the case with the IRMA people. So we can trade back and forth ideas for products and approaches and cool things to do with your web site, so it works out pretty well.

Steve: Very good. Betsy, with over 40,000 paid subscribers and a wide array of advertisers, it would seem that *Adirondack Life* is financially healthy. Is the future bright for the magazine?

Betsy: You know, I think the future is bright for the magazine as long as the future is okay for the Adirondacks. It's been interesting, because since the 1990's there's been some kind of blips in the national economy, but the Adirondack economy has been pretty steady. There hasn't been spectacular growth, but it's been steady. So we reflect our growth. We haven't taken a lot of hits over the last few years. I think as far as the outlook for the magazine, it's good. We're doing some things in 2007 to try to capture some new readers. We are coming out with some new products. We published a beautiful three foot by four foot topographical map a few years ago, and we've turned that map into a jigsaw

puzzle. The next step is a raised relief map of that, where you can actually feel the bumps of the mountains and that kind of thing. Along with boosting the circulation of the magazine, we're coming out with some new products. We just launched an engagement calendar for 2007, a week at a glance with 53 beautiful pictures, and we'll do another engagement calendar with historical pictures in 2008. A lot of projects on the side that people might not associate with *Adirondack Life* immediately, but things that broaden our brand and keep people engaged in the name, anyway.

Steve: Betsy Folwell, thank you very much for being my guest on Periodical Radio, it's been fascinating.

Betsy: Well, thank you for asking, and keep reading!

Steve: I will.

Betsy: Okay.

Steve: Annual subscriptions to *Adirondack Life* are \$24.95. To subscribe write to Adirondack Life, Subscription Service, P.O. Box 410, Jay, NY 12941, or contact them online at <http://www.adirondacklife.com>. Thank you for listening to this installment of Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

8: *International Journal of Comic Art*

Interview with Dr. John A. Lent, Editor-in-Chief

February 2007

The subject of our program is the scholarly journal *International Journal of Comic Art*. Published twice a year, the purpose of the journal is to publish scholarly and readable research about comic books, newspaper and magazine comic strips, caricature, political cartoons, humorous art, animation, and humor and cartoon magazines. Topic coverage is truly international; members of the editorial board represent 40 countries.

Each semi-annual issue runs approximately 500 pages, so the *International Journal of Comic Art* contains 1000 pages per volume at the modest cost to libraries of \$45 per year. Content consists of research articles, interviews, book reviews, exhibition reviews, and a portfolio of comic art. The journal is printed sharply in black ink on white paper. Production quality is very good, and many articles are enhanced with black & white reproductions of comic art.

The Editor-in-Chief and founder of the *International Journal of Comic Art* is Professor John A. Lent. Dr. Lent has published numerous books on the mass media in countries around the world, and is a professor in Temple University's Department of Broadcasting, Telecommunications and Mass Media.

Steve: Professor Lent, welcome to Periodical Radio.

Dr. Lent: Thank you.

Steve: You founded the *International Journal of Comic Art* in 1998. Why is a scholarly journal on comic art important?

Dr. Lent: It's important because there isn't one, or there wasn't one before *International Journal of Comic Art*. There was a periodical that was like an academic journal called in *Ink* which lasted a couple of years down at Ohio State. The other reason was because the field was starting to grow in the 1990's, and the young scholars were lamenting the fact they had no place to publish. Most of the academic journals were hesitant to publish anything on comic art. There was a type of snobbishness which still exists in some circles in academia concerning comic art. So the idea was to try to offset some of this and come out with an outlet for the young scholars. But it wasn't just for the young scholars, it was for, you know we also have people writing for the journal who are fans, or working in the field in other ways.

Steve: I see, so the field of studying comic art is growing, but it is relatively recent as a discipline?

Dr. Lent: It's very recent. But of course there were isolated cases of people writing in comic art, going back decades. There were Ph.D. dissertations as early as forty, fifty, maybe even longer, years ago. But these were all isolated. In the 1940's and '50's there was some activity in scholarship, but most of it had to do with the anti-comics crusade that was led by Dr. Fredric Wertham and also by Senator Estes Kefauver. At that time there were people in education, in sociology, psychology who were writing about it, but writing about comic books as causes of juvenile delinquency, etc. In the United States, it was really in the 1990's that the field starts to open up. In Europe there were people doing scholarship in the 1960's and 1970's.

Steve: What does comic art do that other forms expression don't do, or at least don't do as well?

Dr. Lent: Well, first of all, it's rather unique because it is a blend of visual and verbal. Many other forms of expression are not that. But I think it's effective because of the fact that in a very short space, especially at a time when the attention span of readers seems to be rather short, that in a short space a story can be told with all sorts of nuances, etc., that maybe other art forms cannot do.

Steve: I see. Professor Lent, there's a portfolio section in the *International Journal of Comic Art*. Can you describe it and tell us how you select its content?

Dr. Lent: Well, Portfolio is just a short section at the end of the journal to exhibit some of the cartoons of artists from around the world. I select it by what is sent to me, and also from works that have been given to me by some of the cartoonists I've interviewed. I've interviewed cartoonists on every continent, in the hundreds and hundreds over the last twenty years, and many of them have made their work available. The cartoonists are very generous individuals. The fact that someone from academia is coming to interview them, or talk with them, in many cases this is something that they're pleased about, because they had been ignored for so many years. So it's really a showcase of some comic art, but it doesn't pretend to select the best or even representative comic art. It's what is sent to us. It's what we have in hand.

Steve: And it's presented without commentary, correct?

Dr. Lent: Right, yes.

Steve: I was very impressed at the international coverage. Some publications claim to be international, but they're not truly global. You mentioned that you've had contacts with cartoonists around the world for the last 20 years. What else gives the journal its true international flavor?

Dr. Lent: First of all, the reason I made it international was because of the very narrow focus of those who do, or have in the past studied comic art. So much of what was being looked at, even in the early and mid 1990's, so much of it was American superhero, so that no one knew about the comic art of other parts of the world. Certainly most Americans did not, and even most people working in American scholarship. I recall in the mid-1990's up through 1997 or 1999, taking some of my Ph.D. students, because I'd groomed a number of Ph.D. students in the 1980's to work on Ph.D. dissertations in comic art. We would present at the Popular Culture Association and other conferences. There might be a full room for the panel that had to do with some very small aspect one of the superheroes, and then when we would present our panel on Asia comics, it might dwindle down to five or eight people, and no one seemed to be interested. I even wrote a little essay at that time, in the mid-1990's, saying that it was time that the field of scholarship recognizes that there's something out there besides American superheroes. So that was the idea, definitely, and the word "international" was put into the title of the journal right from the beginning. Then besides using contacts that I've had over the years, I've certainly looked for these papers when I've gone to conferences. They're rare, but when I find them then I ask the contributors to send them in. And I also ask in some cases cartoonists in various parts of the world to write for us, which they've done. The idea was to make it international because there was a void in this area, and that void is starting to be filled now. We're starting to see in the last few years other people write articles and books on comics in other parts of the world, and some Americans are doing this now, too.

Steve: What led you personally to have such an international perspective, to be so interested in other countries and what was going on in other countries?

Dr. Lent: I guess I've that interest since I was in grade school. I lived in a very small village in a coal mining region of western Pennsylvania, and there weren't any books or other types of things there. The only people who had contact with the outside world were those who had immigrated there from Europe, or those who'd come back from World War II, who had served in the South Pacific or in Europe. But I had a fascination with international dimensions, and I explored this later on after I'd graduated from university. In the 1960's, I started traveling quite a bit. In 1964, I went to the Philippines on a Fulbright, and started studying mass communications in Asia. From that I started writing books and editing books and articles on various aspects of Asian mass communications, and eventually on the comic art dimension.

Steve: I see. I'd like to change gears just a little bit now. The current issue of the journal [v.8, no.2, Fall 2006] has an editor's note from you describing why the journal does not have traditional peer review. Could you summarize for us what you say in that editor's note about peer review?

Dr. Lent: Well first of all, I don't want that to seem like an arrogant statement on my part, or anything that would insinuate that we're above that. We're not. It's just that over the years, I personally have been involved in the peer review process, enjoying the reviewing myself, and also having my own works reviewed. It's been such a clumsy and inefficient system in so many cases. I remember one article that had been peer reviewed, it took eight or nine years for it to get through the process. It was on press freedom in the Philippines. Eventually was not published. There was no longer any press freedom in the Philippines. I have a book now that went through this whole process, and then hanging out at the publishers on cartooning in Africa that's been sitting at the publisher's place now for five years. It will be five years in July. I've updated it two or three times. I find that very offensive. I find it also unfair to the authors, who work hard to do these studies and many of them are timely types of studies. And then they sit in some editorial office or sit on some professor's desk who might have the time to get it read. I've done it myself, where I've put things aside, and didn't read them as quickly as I should have. So one of points that I mentioned in there was the timeliness aspect. The *International Journal of Comic Art* prides itself on bringing out articles within six months. If you submit an article now, and it seems like it's something that we're interested in, it will be published in the next issue, six months later. So that's one factor. The second factor is that the *International Journal of Comic Art* as is the other journal that I edit and publish, called *Asian Cinema*, are published out of my house. They're not published by Blackwell or any of these types of companies. So to get involved in that whole peer review process would require a lot of work on our part, and then waiting and prodding the reviewers to get their reviews to us and that sort of thing, again delaying the whole process. I've been asked to consider selling the *International Journal of Comic Art*, and also *Asian Cinema*. Sage was interested in one of them. I don't want to do that, because, again, I don't want these journals in the hands of corporate America. I want to keep them in our, in my hands, and our editorial staff's hands, with the idea we keep editorial autonomy, so we can publish whatever we want. The other thing is that oftentimes with these outside publishers and even with the peer process, people say, "Well, it should be cut down to ten or fifteen pages." We don't do that. If it's a good article and it's not wordy, we've run articles that were thirty pages. Why not? We've also run articles that were much shorter. Of course the last point concerning with the peer review process is that I don't believe that it's always a fair process. I think a lot of times it's a process that includes cliques, the guru of the month type of thing, where you have favorite people out there who supposedly are the big thinkers in the field, etc. And everyone bows to those people and they end up getting these manuscripts they're too busy to do anything with, and that sort of thing. Then there's documented evidence that there's been jealousy in some of these peer review processes. I quote in that piece in the *International Journal of Comic Art* an article from the *Wall Street Journal*, where a couple of medical scientists had come up with some new evidence concerning Alzheimer's disease. They felt their article was being slowed up in

the peer review process because those who were in charge of the journal and others did not want that type of information out, that went against the type of evidence that was there already. To me, that's unfair and it's almost criminal, it's academically criminal to do things like that. I think sometimes the peer review process is a process whereby, you know, if the editor is very busy, would just say to the first person in the office next door, "Will you take a look at this?" I don't believe that's a very accurate peer review process, either. I've had many articles of my own over the years that I know were read by people who knew absolutely nothing about the topic. Then of course we have to remember, comic art is a new field of study. As a new field of study, I don't think the articles should be sent to people who know nothing about it. Most of the people who know something about comic art are either on our editorial board, or they're people who go to the conferences that I frequent, and where I pick up some of these papers. So some of these papers are almost peer reviewed, anyway, because they're being presented at conferences where they're getting feedback from the main scholars in the field who are in the audience. Those are some of the points I was trying to make in that little essay.

Steve: Well thank you very much, very well stated. I have a little bit of a follow-up question on the length of the articles and the length of the issues. You mentioned that you don't have a strict limit, and the price of your journal is very modest. At \$45 for libraries it's very low cost for a journal of its type. How do you afford to have so many pages, almost a thousand pages per volume per year at that price? How do you do that?

Dr. Lent: We cut out all the middle people. There's no publisher. The publisher's not taking, you know, they're not raking in a lot of money for not doing that much, anyway. We're not using distributors, who rake fifty or sixty percent off the top. There have been a few occasions at the beginning where we were having some of our issue distributed by Bud Plant, which is a major distributor of popular culture, mainly comic artwork. But even with him giving us a discount, he was taking fifty percent. So we don't have those charges, and of course we're not paying labor charges. There are only really, except for the contributors, and of course they're very important, but the contributors are sending these articles in, and I do all the editing. All the editing is done by me. I was trained in journalism. I pride myself in my editing, and to a certain degree I like to edit. I do all this by hand, all these manuscripts are printed from the e-mail or whatever, and then I edit them. Then my wife, who's the assistant editor, puts them into the computer. Then a third person who's another assistant editor does the formatting. We have a printer in Detroit who isn't charging that much, either. It's mainly cutting out the middle people, cutting out the distributor, not using a traditional publisher and of course not paying labor. This is a work of passion, this is not a work of profit.

Steve: Some editors with a similar perspective as yours, and I've talked with them for Periodical Radio recently, have taken the approach of doing what's called an Open Access journal, where the entire journal is online and freely available to people. But you

have a print journal. What are your feelings about that, do you see value in having it a printed journal versus being online?

Dr. Lent: I'm a print person. I'm not an online person, I don't particularly like to use online. I do. I'm not technophobia, it's just I'm not... I like to feel the paper, I like the smell of paper. It's a tradition. I still believe that it's important to have the printed version. Art Spiegelman is one of the people on our board, and I saw him not long ago at a conference and he was telling me, you know, I have your journal in my bag here that I'm reading on my tour signing books. He was carrying it that way. Now someone could say, I could just also carry it in a computer, but he didn't. He seemed to be one of the people who also likes to be able to read it on a plane or wherever. I want to keep it in print form, and I don't put it online because if I put it online, then there'd be no reason to have the print version, because you could get it online.

Steve: In the purpose of the journal, at the front, it specifically states that the research must be readable. Why was that important to state?

Dr. Lent: [chuckle] It's important because so much of the academic literature is written in acadamese that is full of so much gobbledygook and stuff to try to impress rather than to express, that I didn't want to do that. Occasionally we end up with a piece or two like that, but that's one of the... and I rewrite. I never change any author's thoughts or anything, but if it's poorly written, I'll take the time to rewrite some of these sentences to try and make them more readable. I guess it's from personal experience of being in the field of journalism for years subscribing to *Journalism Quarterly*, which I'd contributed a number of articles to earlier on, and they were published. But picking up *Journalism Quarterly* written by journalism professors was not readable. I always describe many of those articles in academic journals as articles where you have a short introduction, maybe a short literature review, a large section talking about methodology, making sure that every knows that you know computers and that you know Chi Squares and all that sort of thing, and then almost as an afterthought, "Oops, here we found some findings, too, and here's our interpretation of them." That's an exaggeration, obviously, but I think so much of it is written in that fashion, it's not readable. So this is one of the aims of this journal, that it be readable, and also because we're hoping that it's not just someone working on a Ph.D. who would be reading our journal, that there be other people reading it, also.

Steve: I see. What do you enjoy most about editing the journal?

Dr. Lent: Um, I guess... let's see. Well, when it comes out, obviously. I guess the part I enjoy the most is finding new materials, learning more about it. It's a learning process, learning about cartoons and comics and animation in other parts of the world that I didn't know about, or that I didn't know aspects of. It's the same way that I teach. I teach with the idea that I also learn, that if I'm not learning, then I'm probably not teaching very

well. I learn from keeping up and also from what students may contribute from their own research. So I'm learning. This is the main thing I think I enjoy about it. Some of the editing I enjoy, but some of it I also find very grueling.

Steve: What's grueling, what are the greatest challenges, the grueling aspects?

Dr. Lent: Well a lot of it is written by. . .for instance I've asked, and I'm not going to indicate countries or anything, but I've asked people from countries, for instance, who don't know English very well, to write something because we'd never had anything on that country, for instance, and this is a person who's studying it. But the person only knows whatever language is their own, whether Indonesian, or Korean, or whatever. Then that means it's going to take a long time to edit that manuscript. Some manuscripts take me whole day, six to eight hours to edit because they need a lot of work.

Steve: Well, Professor Lent, I could ask more questions, but I'm afraid we're out of time. This has been very, very interesting, and I thank you very much for our interview.

Dr. Lent: Thank you very much. Doing this type of show is very important to the field of bibliography, so I appreciate it. Thank you.

Steve: Information on how to subscribe to the *International Journal of Comic Art* is online at <http://www.ijoca.com>. Thank you for listening to this installment of Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

9: *Weatherwise*

Interview with Margaret Benner, Managing Editor

February 2007

This installment of Periodical Radio is about *Weatherwise: The Magazine about the Weather*. *Weatherwise* was founded by David M. Ludlum in 1948 at The Franklin Institute in Philadelphia as the magazine of the Amateur Weathermen of America. Mr. Ludlum, a leading scholar in the history of weather, edited *Weatherwise* until 1978. The American Meteorological Society published the magazine from 1952 through 1976, when the publisher became Heldref, a non-profit publisher of educational journals and magazines.

Weatherwise is a glossy magazine published bimonthly, 6 issues per year. The mission of the magazine is "to explore how weather impacts every aspect of culture and society." Each issue runs 80 pages. Compared to most magazines, it has few advertisements. The target audience is individuals with amateur interest in meteorology, who want to know more about the weather than they get from local newscasts. The articles have plenty of substance, but are not difficult to read. Meteorological terms one would not usually hear from the local weathercaster are defined in the text of the articles.

Weatherwise serves as a publication of record for weather in the United States. For example, each year there are summaries of the hurricane and tornado seasons, complete with lists of storms, their intensities, and the damage they caused. The magazine has several regular departments. Rather than list and describe them now, I will let my guest tell you about them. I'm pleased to have as my guest Margaret Benner, Managing Editor of *Weatherwise*.

Steve: Margaret, welcome to Periodical Radio.

Margaret: Thank you for having me, I'm excited to be here.

Steve: I noted in my introduction that the mission of *Weatherwise* is to "explore how weather impacts every aspect of culture and society." Can you share a few examples of the impact of weather from stories in the magazine?

Margaret: Sure. One of our most recent issues . . . I have two good ones you might want to hear about and the audience might be interested in. We actually took a look in our November/December issue at how weather impacted ancient Egyptians. That's an example of how we look at how weather might impact history in a specific period or a specific civilization's history. We looked at how weather affected the aging of the monuments, for example the ancient Sphinx was buried by dust storms for many hundreds, thousands of years, and it was only recently uncovered in the last century.

That's sort of one of the ways we look at how weather impacts history. Another more recent example of how weather impacts culture, society and all that kind of thing, is we recently interviewed one of the fire chiefs of a department in California who fought the deadly Esperanza fire in which five firefighters were killed. The fire took place this last October and we asked him a lot of questions about how fire affects jobs, how it impacts the way they fight fires, how difficult fires are to fight. It sort of an aspect of society you wouldn't necessarily think about weather affecting us much, but it really does.

Steve: What does a reader get from *Weatherwise* that they don't get from television or weather sites on the web?

Margaret: They get an in depth look at the fun or interesting aspects of weather. I think a lot of the, for example, the Weather Channel, or other weather programs, they look at the drama involved, and maybe the human tragedy story. What a lot of media outlets do is they try to bring the audience in by involving lots of pathos and playing on people's emotions. We look at it from a more factual point of view, and get in depth into how weather impacts every aspect of society, whether it's fires, or ancient civilizations, or the internet, or deicing planes, you name it. We look at how it affects everybody's lives, and that's something that a lot of internet sites are not able to do as well.

Steve: So it's not really a scholarly journal, yet there's more substance than one would find in television shows, for the most part.

Margaret: That's right. It's sort of the magazine for the weather enthusiast, for the person who, you know, whether they are working in the field, or loved the weather since they were a child, and they've subscribed to *Weatherwise* since they were 11 years old, or somebody who's just interested in weather, and loves seeing beautiful pictures of different types of weather, or how weather impacts a particular topic that they're interested in. It's really sort of a way for people to escape the technical part of weather and get into the more fun aspect, or the more interesting aspect of it.

Steve: A distinctive characteristic of *Weatherwise* is its regular departments. One is Weather Front; news items about weather and meteorology.

Margaret: That's right.

Steve: How do you select which stories to include in Weather Front?

Margaret: Throughout the two month publication process between each issue, we get a lot of press releases from different governmental and non-profit and for-profit organizations, such as the American Geophysical Union and NASA [National Aeronautical and Space Administration] and NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration]. They let us know what their newest scientific research updates are, and

what their product updates are. We choose which ones we think will be most interesting to readers. We try to get a variety of different topics, and we aim for humor as well as some offbeat news. We also do our own research on the web. We look at Yahoo!, we look at Google News, and try to find things that we think are interesting and that we also think our readers will be interested in.

Steve: Tell us about the Weather Queries department.

Margaret: The Weather Queries department is written by one of our longest contributors, Tom Schlatter. He's been contributing for decades, and he has been writing weather queries for almost as long as he's been contributing, I believe. In that section we have readers write in with any weather related or meteorology related questions. They write to the magazine, we forward them on to Tom. He has a stack that he compiles, and he chooses which questions he'd like to answer. He usually answers two or three per issue. Many of the questions include pictures or diagrams that he can refer to. It's a just great way for the readers to participate a little in the magazine and get some of their burning weather questions answered.

Steve: I see. I found the Retrospect department especially interesting. Can you describe it briefly?

Margaret: Absolutely. Our Retrospect department is written by one of our newest contributing editors, Sean Potter. It is a look at how the weather impacted a specific event in history. One of our most recent issues of *Weatherwise* took a look at how weather affected the crash of the plane that killed Buddy Holly. What factors went into that crash? It was a really interesting Retrospect. It was the basis of Don McLean's ballad "American Pie." It was an interesting look at how people can learn a little a bit about meteorology and how it affected the great events in history.

Steve: Margaret, please tell us about your annual photo contest. It must be a favorite feature among your readers.

Margaret: It is. It really is. They absolutely love it. In fact, I was recently at a conference for the American Meteorological Society and brought far too few of our most recent photo contest issues. People really wanted me to bring more copies of that. That is something we've had going for . . . I believe it started in the last 20 years. We solicit submissions of photographs throughout the year from anybody who would like to submit photographs. It can be anything related to weather that they're interested in. We get hundreds of photographs, and we publish the photographs of the winners in the September/October issue. Some time in July we have our two executive editors and several other judges come down to our offices in D.C. and judge which photographs are the best. We choose a grand prize winner, as well as first prize, second prize, and a number of third prize winners. We give prizes that have been donated by different

companies. It's a great way for us to not only showcase the beauty and power of nature, but the people who read the magazine absolutely love the photos, and we certainly enjoy looking at the photos as well.

Steve: What are some of your criteria for best photo? They must be different criteria than a photography magazine would have.

Margaret: Yeah, I mean these are all amateur photographers. Obviously it has to be a real event in meteorology, it has to be weather related. It just has to showcase something unusual and beautiful. Just taking a picture of mammatus clouds probably won't win you the grand prize, but if it's a picture of mammatus clouds with four rainbows over a sparkling ocean, that might get you higher up there in the prizewinning. It's what strikes us as being the most spectacular, the most unusual, and the best quality.

Steve: Tell my listeners what a mammatus cloud is.

Margaret: A mammatus cloud is one of the, I guess in layman's terms, the puffier formations of clouds that you might see on the horizon. Without getting into the specifics of it, you look up in the sky and see cotton puff clouds, that would frequently be a mammatus cloud, with grey underlying it.

Steve: *Weatherwise* began publication in 1948, is that correct?

Margaret: That's right.

Steve: And David Ludlum was the original editor.

Margaret: Yes.

Steve: He stepped down as editor in 1978. Did he continue influencing *Weatherwise* after he retired as editor?

Margaret: Yes, he did. That was obviously before my time, but I know that he continued writing articles and contributing to the annual almanac issue, which comes out in the March/April issue. He has sort of, because he was the founding editor, and it was his vision, he still influences what I do today, so many decades later. He had such a great love of meteorology and love of history, and just a real interest in the power and beauty of weather. That's sort of how I look at what my goal is to keep the magazine going, is continuing the tradition he started, impressing people with how interesting and amazing and beautiful weather is. So as far as that goes, he is still very much present. I've heard so much about him in the five months that I've been here, it's impressive. He was a great guy.

Steve: I'd like to change gears now and ask a few questions about the business of operating *Weatherwise*. Your magazine is one of about 50 periodicals published by

Heldref, a nonprofit publisher. What are the advantages of the relationship with Heldref, as opposed to independently handling the business of publishing?

Margaret: The purpose of Heldref is to create economies of scale for many of the journals and magazines that have been acquired by the organization. The organization is able to consolidate things like the business office-- accounting, finances, advertising, marketing--all of those different departments that would be difficult for publications to run on their own. But if all the publications have one marketing department, the overhead is lowered considerably. They can then concentrate largely on the editorial side of their publications. That's absolutely true for *Weatherwise*.

Steve: I noticed that articles from *Weatherwise* are included in many full text in many databases produced by EBSCO, ProQuest, Wilson, other large database producers. Can you explain for us how that works? How it is that articles from your magazine appear in full text databases?

Margaret: Absolutely. The way it works is that many libraries and institutions purchase full subscriptions to these consolidators such as EBSCO and ProQuest. Basically EBSCO, ProQuest, Wilson, others like that, they sell packages of journals. For example, they might sell an environmental journal package that could include the magazines *Environment*, *Weatherwise*, and others that could be published by other organizations. Then they price it according to how many journals and what kind of content there is in that kind of package. The library then agrees to buy the entire package as a bundled policy. Then they distribute it to their organization.

Steve: What does *Weatherwise* or Heldref get out of the agreement? There must be a return, I mean, you're not giving it to them for free.

Margaret: We do get a monetary return. It is not substantial, because EBSCO is sort of the middleman in all this. It actually comes down to us getting pennies per article, really. But what we do get, on a larger scale, is wider exposure of our publication to different institutions and different people in academia.

Steve: I see. Have you noticed a drop in subscriptions with those articles being available in full text databases?

Margaret: We really haven't. Particularly *Weatherwise*, most of our subscribers are not actually libraries and institutions, it's largely individuals. So the people who are getting them through their libraries, the libraries would have subscribed, anyway, on their own without ProQuest. So in that way we really haven't. It's imperative that *Weatherwise* be online. That's really just adding to our marketing.

Steve: Why is it imperative for you to have it online? You mentioned that you want broad exposure. Why is that a goal?

Margaret: Well, the younger people in America don't really know something exists unless it's on the internet, and I include myself in that category. So if somebody is looking up weather on Google, they are going to come across *Weatherwise*, hopefully as one of the top things they look up. But otherwise they might not know about it. That's sort of a theme across the board in all of print publications in the U.S. Subscriptions are going down for people who aren't getting online as fast as they need to. People don't necessarily want to read articles and magazines in their print form as much. So we really need to work to make sure they can read them online if they want. *Weatherwise* is a bit different in that we have very, very loyal long term subscribers who really enjoy seeing the photographs in print and enjoy the quality of the paper that we put out, and they just like having *Weatherwise* to read on the train or on an airplane. So we've got pretty loyal subscribers, but in general in the print industry it's been an ongoing problem.

Steve: I noticed on your website, <http://weatherwise.org>, that there is an option to purchase articles with a one month subscription you can get so many articles. Do you see that being the future of the magazine?

Margaret: We are actually in the process of implementing a new system for *Weatherwise* and all of the publications at Heldref Publications, actually. We're going to be working with a new company to try to get individual articles as well as entire subscriptions online for each of the publications. So while you can't buy a subscription to the *Weatherwise* magazine online right now, you will be able to soon. We think we'll get this up and running some time in March [2007]. Unfortunately I don't know as much about this as I wish I did at the moment, but I probably will in another four months or so. The marketing department is working very hard on that right now, and we hope to have the entire thing up and running in the next few weeks.

Steve: You say entire thing. Do you know whether it will be an exact duplicate of the print, or will it be a somewhat different publication once it's in the online environment?

Margaret: It should be largely an exact duplicate, because we'll be providing it in PDF format.

Steve: I see, well that makes sense. Margaret, what do you enjoy most about being the managing editor of *Weatherwise*? And I should ask, too, can you explain for us the difference between a managing editor and some other sort of editor.

Margaret: Absolutely. Well first of all, the managing editor is the one who oversees the entire publication, from start to finish, ranging from deciding what articles to publish, contacting authors, making sure the authors make deadlines, making sure that the articles

that we're running are interesting to our readers, choosing which articles to run, as well as overseeing the entire editing process and publishing process, okaying design of the magazine and making sure we make deadlines to the printers. We have on our staff as well as the managing editor we have an associate editor, Meghan Joyce, who is an integral part of the magazine. She does a lot of the editing, she does some first edits on articles with me, and then does many, many second edits. She helps find photographs and is just sort of my go-to person. We also have an editorial assistant who helps with day to day things as we need them, as well as a fantastic graphic designer who designs the entire magazine. So an associate editor is there to support and help with the managing editor's day to day duties and the managing editor is in charge of making sure we get the magazine out, essentially.

Steve: Is the biggest challenge keeping everything on schedule?

Margaret: It probably is at this point. We've had some changes in schedule in the last couple of issues that have thrown things off a little bit and made it a bit of a challenge at the last minute to get the magazine out. It's a challenge that I really enjoy. I would say that the thing I enjoy most about the magazine is probably the variety of things that I get to do. I've always enjoyed editing. I really like taking an article and seeing what the author is trying to do, and seeing what they've written and working with them to make it better. Then I can go from editing an article about deicing a plane one minute to the next minute looking online for photos of a fire in California. So it's a very varied thing that I do, and I enjoy overseeing the entire process.

Steve: Are many of your submissions unsolicited?

Margaret: We do get some unsolicited submissions. Not that many of them make it into the magazine, simply because they haven't read the guidelines online, or they don't have enough expertise in meteorology for us to accept their article. We really like all of our authors to be fairly well trained in meteorology, or at least very knowledgeable about it. So we do get a certain percentage, and if it looks like it's very promising, we will work with the author to turn it into a great article. But most of our authors are experienced *Weatherwise* writers.

Steve: How do you decide when to define a term? When I was reading articles preparing for the interview, I could generally understand what the article was about. When a term came up that I was unfamiliar with, I generally found that it was defined within the text of the article. How do you make that decision, of when to offer a definition, and when you assume the reader will know?

Margaret: It's a little bit of a personal thing. Neither Meghan nor I have a strict background in meteorology. Our backgrounds are in journalism, actually. We confer with each other, and think "Well, is this something either of us knows?" If the answer is no,

then we do a little bit of research, and if it looks like it's a very, very obvious meteorology term that we probably should know, then we might not define it. But if it's something that seems a bit more obscure, after doing some research on the web or in a geographical dictionary or a meteorological dictionary, then we probably will define it.

Steve: Margaret, could you share with us how you came to be managing editor? You mentioned that you are fairly new to the job, and some of my listeners are no doubt interested in the career of being an editor of a magazine. Can you explain how you got to this position and what your background was?

Margaret: Absolutely. I worked for the past five years in the health policy field, actually. I've worked on several newsletters, daily newsletters that came out about health policy and went largely to people on Capitol Hill. I started as a staff writer and over the next five years moved on up to managing editor of the *Kaiser Daily Health Policy Report*. I worked on that for several months, and it was a fantastic experience. I got a lot of editing experience doing that, and got so much daily writing experience that I felt very comfortable with the editing position. Once I felt like I had outgrown that position, where I stopped learning as much as I wanted to learn, I decided to move into the world of magazine editing, because it just seemed like such a great opportunity. I've always wanted to enter that field, and I was thrilled when they accepted my application. I knew it would be a challenge. It's very different from writing about policy or writing on a daily deadline. Although I no longer have to get up at 5:30 in the morning, which I'm thrilled about. It's a bit different, but it's been a great challenge. My background in writing about health made it so I'm very familiar with having to keep abreast of scientific topics, so it's sort of trading meteorology for health care.

Steve: Would being an editor of a magazine be a career that you would recommend to others?

Margaret: Yes. I have really enjoyed it. It's so different from anything I've done before, but it is something that keeps you on your toes, is constantly a challenge, and it's so varied in everything you do. I had to create a budget for the first time about four months ago, having never done it. It was a very steep learning curve, and now I'm ready to do it again next year. I have to find photographs from NASA, or from Somalia, and I have to solicit articles from people in Canada, or the Arctic. It's just a very varied profession, and the people are fantastic, and I would recommend it to anybody who is interested in the career.

Steve: What have you learned about weather that you had no idea about six months ago?

Margaret: [laughs] Oh, let's see, what have I learned about weather? I have learned that it really does impact everything, even if you don't think about it. It really impacts every part of your day, and every . . . you can come up with any event in history, and somehow

the weather will have impacted it, and it will have changed the outcome of the event, or it will have changed how people reacted to the event. I find that to be the most fascinating thing I didn't realize. My background is actually in history before I went into journalism, and as a historian I just find that fascinating.

Steve: Margaret, is there anything I've not asked you about, that we haven't addressed, that you'd like to talk about before we conclude?

Margaret: I don't think so, just that I hope your listeners would be interested in going out and picking up a copy of *Weatherwise*. We'd love to hear their feedback on what they think of it.

Steve: All right. Thank you very much, Margaret Benner for being my guest on Periodical Radio.

Margaret: Okay, thank you.

Steve: To subscribe to *Weatherwise*, visit www.weatherwise.org. Subscriptions for individuals are \$40 a year. Several pricing options are available for purchasing articles online. Thank you for listening to this installment of Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

11: *Information Technologies and International Development*

Interview with Dr. Michael Best, Co-editor-in-chief, March 2007

This installment of Periodical Radio is about the scholarly journal *Information Technologies and International Development*. This relatively new journal began publication in 2003 by MIT Press. It is an Open Access journal. Open Access means that the content is freely available without subscription to anyone with a web connection. The cost of producing *Information Technologies and International Development* is supported by the Microsoft Corporation.

The Editors, Dr. Ernest J. Wilson III and Dr. Michael L. Best, founded *Information Technologies and International Development* for the purpose of creating a networked community of thinkers and strategists to discuss the relationship of technologies with international development.

The intended audience for *Information Technologies and International Development* is academics, the private sector, non-government organizations, and governments. It attracts readers interested in the "other four billion" – the share of the world population whose countries are not yet widely connected to the Internet nor widely considered in the design of new information technologies.

To learn more about the journal and the topics it addresses, I have as my guest co-editor-in-chief Dr. Michael Best.

Steve: Dr. Michael Best, welcome to Periodical Radio. Michael, let's begin with a description of the journal's purpose for a listener who's unfamiliar with its topic area. What's *Information Technologies and International Development* about?

Dr. Best: Well, as the name implies, we look at information and communication technologies, everything from radio, broadcast radio and broadcast media, to the internet, to mobile telephony, and how they relate to international development issues--political, social, and economic development primarily--in low- and middle-income countries. That will often be countries in Africa, Latin America, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.

Steve: On the website, the phrase is used "the other four billion". Could you describe for me a little bit what that phrase means?

Dr. Best: Sure. Well if you count up the number of folks living in North America and Western Europe and the other sort of OECD countries that are high-income countries, you get about 2 billion folks. If you subtract that from the 6.2 billion, or whatever we're at today, the number of people on the planet, it turns out there's about 4 billion of humanity living outside of high-income countries. Living in sub-Saharan Africa, living of

course in China and India, those two countries will make up a couple billion of those 4 billion, and living in Latin America.

Steve: How does the journal fit with your interest in global community building?

Dr. Best: The journal is designed to facilitate building of an epistemic community among scholars and practitioners interested in these topic areas, so that's kind of its core mission, to try to develop through scholarly, peer-reviewed, first rate research a community of interested parties that are engaged in this kind of work.

Steve: That leads me right to my next question, of what spurred you and Dr. Wilson to launch *Information Technologies and International Development*?

Dr. Best: Yeah, I mean the main reason was, before we were kind of out there, there were very few really tier one, peer-reviewed journals in this space. In fact, let me restate that. There were absolutely no tier one research journals in this space, in our estimation. There were a couple of journals that shared this interest, but either they had weak publishers, or editorial offices, or they were sort of just web based, with what we thought were weaker levels of scholarship. So we really wanted to have a first-rate journal with the backing of a first-rate university press that could hopefully raise the level of discourse among the set of scholars and practitioners in the field. With luck, and we hope, we've accomplished that a bit with *ITID*. Having said that, and let me sort of shamelessly have it both ways, while we wanted to definitely raise the level of discourse, we were always a little, not reluctant, but questioning of the traditional publishing models that traditional university presses have applied to peer-reviewed journals. The MIT Press is our publisher for *ITID*, and they own the title. We understood, me as a tenure track faculty member, playing the tenure game, that I needed publications in these sorts of journals that are indexed, cited, and have the backing of a top rated university press. But we also wanted to be able to critique and have some sort of debate about that process itself. At some point in our conversation we'll probably come to the point where that debate has led us to some new models in our relationship with the MIT Press.

Steve: I do want to discuss that, but right before we go there, why MIT Press? It must be a difficult process to choose a publisher. What was it about MIT Press that led you to choose them over a different university or commercial publisher?

Dr. Best: I think we did, as I was mentioning, go with a top university press. The large corporate journal publishers are definitely organizations that I have kind of some problems with in terms of their approach to selling to academic libraries, in particular. We very much wanted to steer away from the very large two or three commercial journal publishers. MIT was a natural choice for a number of reasons. One, was that I was at MIT at the time, I did all my graduate studies at MIT, then I joined the research faculty for three or four years, so I was sitting there next door to the press, almost. I could almost see

their offices from my office at MIT. MIT Press is one of the, if not the, most cutting edge university presses in terms of how they envision technology and its relationship to humanity. They've done that in many, many different disciplines, not just in the IT world, even in areas as far reaching as cultural studies or cognitive studies. They've managed to sort of take this holistic approach, publishing titles in both their book and journal streams that really cross these disciplines with a lot of strengths. They have this kind of ability to think about how technology and society and humanity interact, and of course that exactly where *ITID* sits, in sort of that nexus between a bunch of engineering issues sitting amongst a bunch of social and political issues. Also, they're a cool press. I don't know how to describe it any other way. If you go especially to their books, regrettably the journals perhaps a little less so, they have a design aesthetic and a coolness about them that is . . . you go up the street to the Harvard University Press, and you know that press isn't cool, but the MIT Press really is. They have for years really pushed the envelope in design sensibilities for university press publications. I find that exciting, just in terms of the publishing world.

Steve: Sounds like your very happy with your press, for good reason.

Dr. Best: Well, MIT Press is a great press. We've been working with them as vigorous partners. There are strengths and weaknesses. You know, now that I'm on the other side with the press, they would, I'm sure, admit to some issues as well. They're only slowing coming to understand some of the editorial office support software that many other presses would offer to their editorial offices. Regrettably, MIT Journals section has yet to institutionalize that, so that's an example of where we've been debating and discussing since the inception of *ITID*, on ways editorial office work flow can be enhanced via some of these tools. As with any other publisher, you take some of the bad with the good.

Steve: Let's now address Open Access publishing. I addressed it very briefly in my introduction to this show, so I described very basically what Open Access is. Will you explain for our listeners why you chose to go to an Open Access business model for your journal?

Dr. Best: There are two or three principal reasons. One is that it's good for the authors. We know that if you look at the library studies research, the citation studies, that Open Access published material enjoys times two, times five the citation rates, the reader rates, than the traditional models of subscription journal articles. So it's a great way for an author to very easily dramatically increase their impact of their scholarly output. So it's good for authors. It's good for readers. Well, I mean, you know that's kind of a no brainer, insofar as it's accessible to everybody for free on the internet. What's the downside there? But in particular for *ITID*, where a lot of our readers, and authors for that matter, are in low income countries at institutions with very limited budgets, say at a university in sub-Saharan Africa or perhaps an Indian university. The traditional

publishing model would be prohibitive, would prohibit them from ever being able to afford the subscription. Parenthetically, I would just add, we always had a special subscription rate for institutions or individuals in low income countries, so they did always did get, even when we were under a traditional subscription model, a discount. That was still prohibitively expensive for many of the kind of institutions that we're most interested in targeting. Finally, it's good for libraries, especially university libraries. I'm sure you know as a librarian at the College of Saint Rose that libraries, university libraries in particular, are struggling with journal costs. They now account for 50%, 60% of the library's budget. You could probably tell me those details far better than I can guess at them. But I know it's become a major issue. So as journals move to Open Access, which is something that is just natural given the web and internet today, it's good for libraries. They can get back into the business of archiving of scholarly communication activities and collecting those books that you really still want as a book on a shelf, which you know is not necessarily every last piece of published material requires sort of a book on the shelf anymore. But those special things that do require it are expensive and the library is a natural place to invest in that.

Steve: Sure, and I would add to that a journal like *Information Technologies and International Development* would not be a natural thing for us to subscribe to as a title, because we don't have a major in international development or anything like that. But with it being available, an undergraduate student doing a research paper, if they became interested in that topic area, then that would be available to them. We most probably would not subscribe to it, but with it being available, it opens it up to our students and faculty.

Dr. Best: Sure, and that would be true for many, many universities, and it would also be particularly true for *ITID*, which is very interdisciplinary, and therefore a little more difficult amongst the acquisitions community in a library, which is generally highly disciplinary siloed. Most university libraries have an acquisitions librarian for computer science, siloed in that area, and not necessarily able to think across disciplinary approaches. In some ways the traditional library acquisition approach worked against these kinds of interdisciplinary journals, and perhaps that would restrict our attractiveness to the university libraries under a traditional subscription model.

Steve: Indeed. How did you convince MIT Press to go to the Open Access model? My understanding from the web site is your journal was the first journal published by MIT Press that is Open Access.

Dr. Best: Correct. We are the first and still the only. We convinced them by just making it clear that this is first of all the way the world is moving, and that we were the most natural journal amongst their collections to sort of allow them to experiment with this new world of scholarly publication, and that we as an editorial office was willing to do

some of the heavy lifting in terms of getting the journal up and ready for this new model. I think in many ways, to be honest, it was not a hard sell. The press knew they had to begin to experiment with this, they know they had to begin to learn about these new publication approaches, and we were the first to say, “Hey, we’re ready to do this.” So they sort of jumped at the approach. One thing I would say, again having praised MIT Press for all their strengths, surprisingly they are not very tech savvy, which I’m sure seems odd, given that they’re sitting there at MIT. So they’re not actually terribly internet savvy. So we have been willing to work with them and try to keep them on the cutting edge as best we can in terms of whether it’s a paid subscription model or an Open Access model. I guess in many cases it doesn’t matter since all their journals have an online presence. We’ve also been pushing under the Open Access model towards much more cutting edge and interactive web presence.

Steve: Your web site thanks the Microsoft Corporation for generously supporting the journal. Do you see corporate underwriting of journals as an idea that could be applied to other journals?

Dr. Best: I do, I mean I’m sure that it doesn’t apply universally in the normal way that if you’re a university faculty person raising funds across different disciplines, there’s not equality in ability to raise money. What do I mean by that? If you’re a humanities faculty member, there are much more limited places you can approach for funding, and high tech firms are probably not one of them. If you’re an IT journal, Microsoft is an obvious fit. You can approach them and they in this case as you can see, stepped up to the plate and gave us a generous gift. I think it can be applied, but it’s not going to be a one size fits all approach. Different journals will have different constituencies in terms of private sector or foundation donors, and they’ll have to work that on a case by case basis, would be my suspicion. However, boy it would be nice, and one could imagine somebody like the Soros Foundation network, or the Bill and Melinda Gates library component of their foundation deciding that they wanted to really do something big in Open Access journal publishing and approach a university press and say, “Hey, we have the resources.” The Gates Foundation clearly does with their library mandate. The Soros Foundation clearly does with their mandate to spreading information in an open society. Why don’t they just come with the few million a year and create a wealth of Open Access journals? I think that would be a great approach.

Steve: I’ve found editors and publishers very hesitant to talk about costs, but would you be willing to tell our listeners roughly how much it costs per year to produce your journal?

Dr. Best: We’re a little expensive. I think we’re spending about \$75,000 a year.

Steve: For roughly how many articles per volume?

Dr. Best: Four full research articles . . . Oh, per volume? Four times four.

Steve: So sixteen, okay.

Dr. Best: And then about three times four, so twelve smaller things, either editorials, or opinion pieces, short items.

Steve: Let's return to the content of your journal. As I perused it, I noticed many articles address the impact of wireless technologies in the developing world. Why is wireless so big in the developing world, why is that such an important issue?

Dr. Best: Well part of it is this so-called leap frog capability that many low income countries have. They don't have already heavy investment in fiber or copper infrastructure like we have here in the states. Over the years of Ma Bell and AT&T and the various evolution of the private telco operators and then the parallel evolution of the cable television operators in the states, they have dug up, trenched, and laid a lot fiber networks, a lot of copper networks, and a lot of coaxial networks that would be the networks that bring you your cable TV. If you're in Burkina Faso, if you're living in Koudougou in point of fact there is a very limited infrastructure, either in fiber or copper. If you're in Liberia, living in Monrovia, which you may know, and many of your listeners may remember, just emerged out of a protracted civil conflict only twelve or eighteen months ago. Their entire copper infrastructure was looted during the civil war, so there's not a single land line. There are no telephones beyond mobile. So what do they do? Let's take the Monrovia example. There are no copper phone lines anywhere. All gone. No infrastructure. What are you going to do? Are you going to start laying fiber and running copper, which is expensive in terms of just the raw materials. It's labor intensive, it takes time and also has in a place like Monrovia issues around physical security of the facilities. Or do you just throw up a few microwave mobile cellular towers here and there, a few in Monrovia and a few in other parts of the country? Literally within months you can have wide coverage of most of the metropolitan areas of Liberia with mobile phones and a complete absence of a copper infrastructure and fixed line phones. So that is this green field, leap frog kind of approach that many low income countries have taken. They don't have the history of significant communications infrastructure in place, and they move straight up to microwaves technology and terrestrial wireless approaches.

Steve: You have a special issue on wireless technologies coming out soon, is that correct?

Dr. Best: Yeah.

Steve: It has guest editors. I'd like to ask about the process of choosing guest editors. How do you do that? What are the benefits for the journal? Why do you choose guest editors?

Dr. Best: The how we do it is completely opportunistic at this point, to date at least. All of our guest editors, for the most part have approached us, or we have been involved in the meetings that sort of germinated the set of articles, or we have ongoing relationships. We've just been opportunistic when a clear critical mass of interesting work in a focused area is present, and that there's some scholar that we have high regard for who's been shepherding that work, then we sort of jump at that chance to do a special issue. From the perspective of Ernie and I and the journal, special issues are great, because readers like them, because they give you one place to go and really get a range of focused material on one area. So if you're interested in that topic, it's the go-to for a specific area. It also helps with our flow and management of submissions. Frankly, it offloads some of the very hard work our so-called editorial office--I say so-called because it's just Ernie Wilson, my co-editor-in-chief and one editorial assistant--it's a considerable amount of work that we have already on our plate to manage *ITID*. Of course for Ernie and I, we have day jobs as well. We're both faculty members at universities, so *ITID* is just one of many things that we do. So there's wrong with offloading some of that work on guest editors, and we get a very high quality product out of that, too.

Steve: Dr. Best, what do you enjoy best about being editor of the journal, given the situation that you just described of having a day job, and it being on top of a normal work load.

Dr. Best: The best part is that it forces me, you know, sometimes I cuss and get angry, but in the end the great thing is it forces me to read a ton of work in my field. Right now my editorial assistant, I think, has seven or eight things that I should read this week. Her job is to nag, and she does that with a considerable capability. So I routinely get the nagging e-mails about how I'm behind on what I'm supposed to have read. The coolest thing is I'm always reading submissions and re-submissions, making final editorial decisions, making initial decisions as to whether something is worthy of being sent for peer review and so forth. That really is great. It just keeps me on top of what's going on out there, what people are thinking about, and what are sort of the major issues in my field.

Steve: Dr. Michael Best, especially in that context, I very much appreciate you taking the half hour for this interview. We're just about out of time. Is there anything you'd like to add that we haven't discussed?

Dr. Best: Well, just to sort of a bit of a hoorah to MIT Press and to the general process of going to Open Access, and to encourage authors in particular to know their rights, to seek

out publication platforms that are Open Access, or that have stronger author rights. There still are publishers where you pay them to take your work, you sign the copyright over to them, they own everything, and then you buy back some preprints after they've published it, and they're selling it to other folks. I think with things like the Open Access movement, authors are beginning to realize, "Hey, wait a minute, I'm doing all the work and then I'm buying it back from them, having given them all the rights? Does that make sense?" So my final comment would just be to all the authors out there, know your rights. Seek out journals that if not Open Access, at least offer you as the creator of the material the right to publish copies on your web site, or to deposit the material your institutional archive that allow you rights for derivative works on you own intellectual output, and not to go to these publishers that take everything, and then ask you to buy it back from them.

Steve: Dr. Best, thank you very much for being my guest today.

Dr. Best: My pleasure.

Steve: *Information Technologies and International Development* is available online at <http://www.mitpressjournals.org/loi/itid>. Thank you for listening to this installment of Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

11: *Mathematical Intelligencer*

Interview with Marjorie Senechal, Co-Editor-in-Chief, May 2007

This installment of Periodical Radio is about *Mathematical Intelligencer*, a quarterly publication about mathematics, mathematicians, and the history and culture of mathematics. This periodical straddles the definition of a journal and a magazine. The glossy cover and 11" by 8 1/4" format give it the physical look of a magazine, and most of the content requires little background in mathematics to read and understand. But like a scholarly journal, most articles cite references, and some include mathematical formulas. I think any reasonably educated person could gain from reading *The Mathematical Intelligencer*, but some of the articles do require a math background to make much sense of them. And like a scholarly journal, book reviews are an important component.

The Mathematical Intelligencer has been published since 1978 by Springer, a major publisher of scientific books and journals based in Germany. Since its beginning, the journal's mission has been to foster communication among mathematicians and others interested in mathematics. Interdisciplinary treatments of mathematical topics are encouraged, as are articles about mathematical communities. The editors welcome humor, puzzles, poetry, fiction, and art.

I won't describe the articles and features in the current issues, because that can be done so much better by my guest today, Dr. Marjorie Senechal. Dr. Senechal shares with Dr. Chandler Davis the job of Co-Editor-in-Chief of *The Mathematical Intelligencer*. Dr. Senechal is Louise Wolff Kahn Professor in Mathematics and History of Science and Technology at Smith College.

Steve: Dr. Senechal, thank you very much for taking time in your busy schedule for our interview. I very briefly described *The Mathematical Intelligencer* in my opening, but could you summarize for our listeners what the journal is about?

Dr. Senechal: Well, we think of it as a journal of mathematical culture. Usually when I say that to someone, they're just stunned at the thought that there is such a thing as mathematical culture, and they can't imagine what that is. But there is, and it is really a very deep culture; a very rich culture. There's mathematical history, there are mathematical communities around the world, there are viewpoints about the nature of mathematics, its meaning, its relation to art, its relation to physics and to all kinds of other intellectual endeavors. We also feature lots and lots of book reviews, and puzzles, entertainments, and humor, and we include mathematics-related art and poetry, and fiction, too. So it's quite diverse, and we think of all that as constituting mathematical culture.

Steve: I see. I wanted to have you talk briefly about each of the departments in the journal. I'll name each one individually, and let you describe them.

Dr. Senechal: Okay.

Steve: "Mathematical Entertainments."

Dr. Senechal: The "Entertainments," that is a new name for what we used to call "puzzles," where people would send in problems that required a lot of ingenuity but not the kind of problems that people have worked on for 300 years, but more the kind that anyone with a minimum background could get involved in and probably solve, and yet whose solutions weren't known. But we realized that is too narrow, so we've broadened "Entertainments" to include articles that are just interesting, even though they aren't necessarily posing problems. For example, we had one recently on phyllotaxis, you know, the relation of the seeds in a sunflower to the Fibonacci series and so forth, which we showed is not in fact the case, it's not always related to that. So that's a fairly broad thing. In the current issue, "Entertainments" is on Suduko's French ancestors, the early forms of this that are not well known to people. Suduko is this very popular mathematical game which really came from France, and we have an article on the early French versions.

Steve: Yes, that was an interesting article. My parents are very into Suduko, and I'm sure they'll be interested in that article when I show it to them.

Dr. Senechal: Do you have a copy of the current issue?

Steve: Yes, we do. My library, at the College of Saint Rose, the Neil Hellman Library, has been a subscriber of *Mathematical Intelligencer* since the beginning, since volume one.

Dr. Senechal: Oh, that's great. You know, we're just about to celebrate our 30th anniversary.

Steve: That's right.

Dr. Senechal: It's a journal that's continued now for 30 years.

Steve: Under the same title, and with a lot of continuity.

Dr. Senechal: Yes, same title, and we're now producing with volume 29, and we're working on volume 30.

Steve: Wonderful. Well, that leads to the next department, "Years ago."

Dr. Senechal: The “Years Ago” department is a rather eclectic department of historical things. So they range tremendously as to what the topic is, and when it took place, but the main thing that holds these together is that they are about mathematical history. So, for example, in looking at not the current issue but the one before, the “Years Ago” is an article written by a professor at Vassar on airborne weapons’ accuracy, and how mathematicians worked in the Second World War in applied mathematics panels to improve mathematically the accuracy of airborne weapons. This is not the kind of thing we usually run, but it was a very interesting sidelight on war work of various mathematicians who were well known for other things, but not for this.

Steve: I see. Next would be “Mathematically Bent.”

Dr. Senechal: “Mathematically Bent” is a humor column written by a Colin Adams, who is a professor of mathematics at Williams College, and Colin is one of the funniest people around. He writes this himself. Many of the columns have contributions from other people. We have a column editor who then accepts submissions, and reviews them and decides which ones to accept, and so on. Sometimes the column editor writes them himself or herself, but otherwise accepts submissions. But Colin writes these all himself, and they’re just wonderful.

Steve: Is it humor a non-mathematician would get?

Dr. Senechal: I think so, yeah. The thing I love about Colin’s column is that they’re enjoyable on many levels. If you are a mathematician you can get word plays and so forth that might escape someone who isn’t. But if you’re not a mathematician you can still have a wonderful time with these. For example, in a recent issue, there’s one about the mathematical ethicist. He poses pseudo-ethical problems that mathematicians run into, and they’re hilariously funny, and anyone could appreciate those.

Steve: The next is “Mathematical Communities.”

Dr. Senechal: This is a column that features mathematical communities around the world, past and present. It’s often written by people who live in those communities. We’ve had articles from, for example, an Albanian mathematician who was an émigré but went back after the end of communism to see the state of mathematics in Albania. We’ve had many articles on Europe, of course, throughout the ages. We’ve had articles on African mathematics, and we’ve had articles on the Philippines. It’s a very, very broad, wide ranging column. One that’s coming up very soon is going to be an article about the relation between religion and mathematics in 19th and early 20th century Russia.

Steve: Mathematical communities are more than formal organizations or associations of mathematicians.

Dr. Senechal: That's right. We define a community to be any number of mathematicians greater than one, although I did write an article about one person once for that, because this was a person who was a very unusual and offbeat mathematician who was very strongly supported by the more conventional mathematicians. I felt that reflected on the type of community that we feel we have as mathematicians. But they don't have to--it does not mean these communities have to be organized in any particular way. Sometimes they are. It really varies a lot.

Steve: The next would be the "Mathematical Tourist."

Dr. Senechal: "Mathematical Tourist" is a fun column, I think. These are articles about either places that you can visit that famous mathematicians lived, or monuments to them, or particular buildings with interesting mathematically related architecture, or observatories, or sometimes they're about libraries that have particularly rich collections of historical mathematical works. Again, very varied.

Steve: Then the next would be the "Reviews" section.

Dr. Senechal: The review section is book reviews, and the book reviews section is growing very rapidly. It's always been large, but it's growing very rapidly because the number of books about mathematics and mathematicians--books of fiction, books of non-fiction, straight textbooks, strict monographs--the number of these is growing very, very fast. We try to keep up with them and keep abreast of them so that our readers can be aware of which books they should be looking for.

Steve: Are there ever reviews of films or other media?

Dr. Senechal: Yes indeed, yes, certainly there are. We just reviewed an opera in Germany. We reviewed a play in France. We've reviewed other things like that.

Steve: I see. The last department was a bit of a surprise to me, "Stamp Corner."

Dr. Senechal: The "Stamp Corner." This one, you know to my great surprise, goes back to the very beginning of the *Intelligencer*. I recently was able to get a copy of the very first issue, which was really volume zero, before volume one, before it actually became a journal. At that time it was more of a broadside printed by Springer Verlag editors just to alert people to various issues, forthcoming books and so forth. Even then, there was not a regular stamp column, but there were stamps featured. The stamp person who does this . . . I should say that all of these columns really reflect the personalities and the interests of their column editors, and in some cases a column is designed around that editor. In other words, without that editor we probably wouldn't have that column. For others, the column is one that we try to keep filled all the time, so the editors rotate. But in the case of stamps, it is Robin Wilson in England. I think he's done it maybe not for thirty years,

but for a very long time. Several of the columns have been collected into books, and one of his is called *Stamping through Mathematics*. I don't know where he finds these things. They're all over the world, stamps that have mathematical content. He groups them by theme. His theme now is running through the alphabet, things that start with an N, with an O, with a P. We publish those always on the back page of each issue.

Steve: So it's a one page department about stamps.

Dr. Senechal: Yes, it's a one page department. It's always the same size, and he writes a little commentary. Once in a great while someone submits something to him, and we run those for that issue, but it's mostly Robin finding these things somehow, somewhere, and they're wonderfully diverse.

Steve: I'd like to change gears just a little bit now. The instructions for authors for *The Mathematical Intelligencer* call for submissions to be in LaTeX.

Dr. Senechal: That's right.

Steve: Could you describe for our listeners what that is, and why it's used?

Dr. Senechal: Well LaTeX is a typesetting program that allows you to input code for the mathematical symbols very nicely. It's not of particular use if you're writing, for example, book reviews. You can use that or you can use Word, it doesn't make any difference, because there are almost never any equations or mathematical symbols in book reviews, although in some cases of course there are. But LaTeX facilitates equations and symbols so easily and so beautifully that it's become the industry standard for all mathematical publishing, and I think physics, too, and many other sciences. It's not a WYSIWIG [what you see is what you get], you don't see it on the screen, but it's easy to convert to PDF file, and then you can see what it actually looks like. But the code is easy to learn, and most mathematicians have learned it, because when you write mathematical papers this is what you're expected to use. The reason that we are asking for it now (if you look back a few issues you'll see we didn't), is because we're planning to also have an online presence. We want to use the capabilities of Springer Verlag, our publisher, for faster turnover and for better printing jobs. Maybe that's not quite the right way to say it, it's just for smoother production, let's say. So we want to move in that direction, and because almost all mathematicians do use this, it's not too much to ask of them, we think.

Steve: Thank you. Marjorie, how did you become one of the editors-in-chief? How did that come to be?

Dr. Senechal: Well, it came to be that Chandler Davis, who was the editor, asked me to do it. I have loved the *Intelligencer* all my career, and from time to time did book reviews

or some articles for it. Then quite a few years ago, I guess maybe ten years ago, Chandler asked me if I would be the editor of the “Entertainments” column. I said no, I didn’t want to do that, because I’m not a puzzle person, as much as I think they’re fun. I don’t have that enthusiasm for math puzzles that an editor of that column really has to have. But I said I would love to do something, and I thought up the idea of the “Communities” column. That seemed to fit very well, because the *Intelligencer* had already had articles off and on that fit under that rubric, anyway, so we just made that a column. I began to work on that. I guess I’d done that about eight years, and then Chandler Davis, who had been the editor-in-chief for thirteen years, said he thought it would be a good idea if we were co-editors. I thought that sounded good, too, so I agreed to do it, and we’ve been working together now for several years.

Steve: What do you enjoy most about being co-editor?

Dr. Senechal: Well, I love editing. What I love about editing, partly, is it’s fun to take a piece of writing and see how to help the author find ways to make it better. I love working with the authors. I find in so many ways it’s a natural extension of teaching. I’ve been teaching for many, many years, and I find this very enjoyable. A difference is I don’t see the people I’m working with, they’re all over the world. One thing I meant to point out before is that one of the very special things about *The Mathematical Intelligencer* is that the audience is international, and so are the contributors. So when we say that it’s a mathematical culture, we mean the international, worldwide mathematical culture. We work very hard to make sure that it doesn’t just speak to, say, a North American audience, but that the articles represent and are of interest the international community. So back to the editing, it’s a great pleasure to work with people from all over the world, and to discuss with them what it is they’re trying to say and to help make these things stronger and better, and also to work with Chandler to shape an issue and to try present a lively balance of things. Also, you know, looking toward the future, of how to make this even a stronger and more widely read journal.

Steve: You mentioned the potential to go online?

Dr. Senechal: Yes.

Steve: Is that part of the future plan?

Dr. Senechal: Yes, it is. It’s taking us a little time to do it. We’ve been planning this for quite a while, and I think it’s going to be moving ahead now.

Steve: What are the greatest challenges of being an editor?

Dr. Senechal: I think that always the greatest challenges are soliciting really lively and interesting and timely articles that will be read. I’m including in that things like the

history and everything else, not just the mathematical articles. But making it lively, interesting, and timely, and of wide interest. Also, I think the other challenge, which is related to that, is to broaden the readership. Thirty years ago the mathematical community was quite small, relatively speaking. Now it's enormous. I mean, things have changed so much with the advent of the computer and the blurring of distinctions between pure and applied mathematics, and the growth of mathematical biology and so many other areas of applications. The mathematical community is much broader, much more diverse. Vastly more women are now in mathematics. It's just a different picture. When I go to the mathematics meetings now, it's a completely different atmosphere than it was thirty years ago. It's really almost unrecognizable. We want to be in touch with and keep up with the interest of this much broader readership. Also, I really value the contributions and the opinions of friends of mine who are historians, philosophers or others about mathematics, their own reflections on it, their thoughts. We want the *Intelligencer* to be of interest to this wider community, and also to have them contribute to it. So those are the challenges that I see.

Steve: Very interesting. An editorial in the first official issue, volume one, issue one, of the *Intelligencer* states that the patron saint of the journal is Leonard Euler. Can you tell us who he was and why he's held as a model?

Dr. Senechal: Well, it's great that you found that. That really is a lovely essay. I'm hoping that we'll reproduce that essay, actually, in our 30th anniversary issue, because I think it's a wonderful one. But Leonard Euler, he was one of the greatest mathematicians of all time, I think, and most prolific. Euler published and lived to be well into his 80's. He never stopped doing mathematics, even though he became blind the last ten to twenty years of his life. He's the most prolific mathematician of all time, and his collected works are still being published. There are maybe twenty or thirty volumes already, and there's going to be far more. The project goes on and on. There's a big celebration of his 300th anniversary this year in Basel, where he is from. But the reason the *Intelligencer* made him the patron saint was not that he was so prolific, and that he was so courageous to continue his mathematics even though blind. It was because he was not afraid to pose questions that he didn't know the answers to, to make guesses, to publish attempts at solutions, even if he didn't find them. In other words, he was provocative and challenging, and he stimulated dialogue. This is what we want to do, also. We don't want this to be the kind of journal where you say, okay, here we've solved this problem, theorem, proof, that's it. We want to make people think, we want to make people discuss, we want to make people argue. We'd rather publish a guess that questions, that says "this is something we want." We hope people will get involved in and start thinking about it, rather than having everything be all tidied up and so on. That's why he's the patron saint, because of his free spirit.

Steve: I see. Dr. Senechal, from the journal, your personal web page, and your publications, it's very clear that you have a real passion for liberal education and interdisciplinary applications of mathematics.

Dr. Senechal: Um-hum.

Steve: Why are you so keenly interested in the broad contexts within which mathematics is studied?

Dr. Senechal: Well, first of all, I don't think mathematics can be really understood unless you understand the context. Mathematics is a subject that has many, many roots, and many, many branches. To really understand the ideas of mathematics, you have to see them as they've evolved over time, and as they play out in different fields. So I feel that it's a subject that's inherently interdisciplinary, even though we think of it, or unfortunately, often teach it as just, "this is math, and it has nothing to do with anything else." I think it really comes from and applies to and belongs to a much wider culture. Then it's just my personal bent, I've never recognized boundaries between disciplines, it's just not the way I think. Boundaries are just not there for me.

Steve: How much knowledge of mathematics do you think a person needs to be genuinely liberally educated?

Dr. Senechal: Well, that's a very good question. I don't know what you mean, though, by how much. I mean, I wouldn't want to say you should have calculus or you should have this or you should have that, because I don't think there's any one prescribed route into knowing mathematics, and no particular milestones one should have to...

Steve: Well, let me give you some context.

Dr. Senechal: Okay.

Steve: As most colleges are, here at the College of Saint Rose, we're having an ongoing discussion of the requirements for liberal education for all majors at the college, and of course part of that discussion is the requirements of how much mathematics, how much laboratory science, etc. students must take. Do you have a feeling about, for any college student, how much exposure to mathematics of any sort they should have?

Dr. Senechal: Well, yes, and my views I should say are controversial, so you shouldn't take me as any kind of patron saint on this. I think there are two things. I think one is that the student should have enough mathematics to understand how to read the newspaper, to understand the roles of quantitative thinking and reasoning, to be able to read graphs, to be able to understand numerical arguments. To be able to essentially make their way in the current world, and I don't think you can do that without some math background. That's number one. Then I think it's really important that every student in liberal arts

colleges, and Smith is included, understands that mathematics is one of the great creations of the human mind, a deep and profound aspect of human culture that should be seen in that light.

Steve: Thank you. Where does a periodical like *The Intelligencer* fit into the overall goals of liberal education?

Dr. Senechal: Well, I think it is something that should be around, and that people should read. I mean, it's a little bit advanced for the undergraduates, I mean as a whole. Although I think math majors could certainly read with profit almost all the articles. It's not something that should be in every dorm, necessarily, because it maybe is a little bit too specialized for that. But certainly it should be in math lounges, it should be in the science library, in the math library, it should be available and students should be encouraged to read it. A lot of things in the *Intelligencer* make wonderful starts for projects that students could be doing in connection with math classes or in connection with mathematics or science or liberal arts classes. We have a rich source of material here that people could use.

Steve: Dr. Senechal, our time is actually almost up. Is there anything you would like to add before we conclude?

Dr. Senechal: No, except that I'm just so pleased that you chose the *Intelligencer* to focus on this time.

Steve: You've been a very interesting guest, thank you very much.

Dr. Senechal: Thank you.

12: *True West*

Interview with Bob “Boze” Bell, Editor, May 2007

This installment of Periodical Radio is about *True West*, a glossy magazine dedicated to preserving the American West. Heavily illustrated and with many advertisements, *True West* has stories about the history of the West, current events in historic preservation, news about collecting artwork, guns, and other memorabilia, and reviews of books and films. The advertisements complement the magazine’s themes, being focused on life and leisure in the West, art and collectables, and vacation opportunities.

True West is published 11 times a year, including an annual Special Source Book issue. Each issue runs about 100 pages, sometimes more, and costs \$5.99 at bookstores. The writing style is informal. The magazine strives for historical accuracy, but lets its authors express their opinions.

My guest is Bob Boze Bell, executive editor of *True West*. Bob has a colorful history and an interesting story about how he came to run the magazine. I’ll let him tell the story in his own words.

Steve: Bob Boze Bell, welcome to Periodical Radio.

Bob: It’s a pleasure to be here.

Steve: First, please share with our listeners how you came to be executive editor of *True West*.

Bob: Well that’s a long bloody story, but the short Cliffs Notes version is that this is a magazine I read as a kid growing up in Kingman, Arizona in the 1950’s and I always would see it when I was in college and elsewhere and thought, “Man, I could do something with that magazine if I ever had the chance.” And in 1999 they were up for sale and two crazy friends of mine and I bought it in Stillwater, Oklahoma and took it to Cave Creek, Arizona, and it’s been here for the last 8 years.

Steve: Tell us about Joe Small, and what the magazine was like in its early years.

Bob: Well Joe Small was a really entrepreneurial guy. After World War II he started doing magazines out of his living room in Austin, Texas. He kept wanting to do sportsman type publications, and he’d get them printed and he would sell all the ads and his wife helped him. Then one time in one of the sporting magazines he ran a letter about an outlaw, and he just got a ton of mail on it, and he thought, “You know what, I wonder if this could support a real magazine?” At that time, you know, there was *True Magazine*, *True Detective*, that kind of thing. So he came up with the title *True West*, and the first

one was launched in 1953. All of a sudden he just really hit the jackpot, because westerns at the same time were proliferating on TV, and people like myself wanted to know, “Well, how much of this is true?” So by the early 1960’s he had hit a circulation of about 250,000 off newsstand, which is just outrageous.

Steve: So the main theme of the magazine was comparing what people were seeing in other media with the historical record?

Bob: Well that was, I would say, the cornerstone of the enterprise. There was just a hunger for well, how much of this Wyatt Earp TV show is actually real? So month after month he told the true stories, and that’s what really attracted me, and I was just a huge fan of this magazine as a nine year old boy.

Steve: I see. What counts as “The West”? Anything west of the Mississippi?

Bob: Well no, you know, that’s a funny . . . it’s a good question actually, and we argue about this constantly here at the magazine because it’s constantly shifting. If you’d asked that question in 1900, you know it would have been probably along the lines of the actual borders of the United States, but now you have to deal with Alaska, and the Alaska gold rush, and a lot of the West took place in Mexico. So you really need to go deep down in there. Then the biggest phenom is that as the 20th century developed, certain towns that were wild in their heyday have lost their panache as an Old West name. Probably the best example is Los Angeles. Los Angeles was a huge wild, wild place in the 1850’s, but who’s going to go see a movie, and say “Let’s ride over to Los Angeles?” You know, the modern city usurps the original meaning. As the century has gone on, there are these anomalies, these strange exceptions. For example, Phoenix doesn’t work, because it’s too industrial now, and too modern, but somehow Tucson still works. When we get into Texas, Fort Worth works, even though it’s a large place, but Houston is too space oriented. So if a cowboy in a western were to say “Let’s ride over to Houston,” that doesn’t work. It really gets dicey up north. Aspen, Colorado, that’s not gonna work, but yet Cripple Creek still works. Then up in the Northwest they have real problems because “Hey, let’s mosey over to Seattle”--it just doesn’t work. So you end up with these kind of pockets of what the imagination of the West entails and we’re all about that.

Steve: It sounds like the time period is essentially the Civil War until 1900 or so?

Bob: Well even that’s moving. It’s very . . . history’s very fluid. I like to say nothing changes more than the past. Nothing changes more than history, because what we believed about Wyatt Earp ten years ago is not true today, because someone discovered that Wyatt Earp was in a whorehouse in 1872 rather than actually hunting buffalo like he said he was.

Steve: Here I am in Albany, NY, and at one point in United States history this was the West.

Bob: Exactly, and so it's constantly moving. The time period is moving. Now think about this: when I was kid, the real Old West was about 50 years before me, and now we're at a stage where fans of history, they put as much importance on where John Wayne filmed *The Searchers* in Monument Valley as they do on Picacho Peak, the Civil War battle. It was 50 years ago when *The Searchers* was filmed, so that's bringing on its own historic importance, the fact that movies were filmed at a certain place, and that's a new phenom.

Steve: Art work is an important component of *True West*, both in the illustrations and in feature stories about the market for western art. How does art enhance appreciation for and understanding of the American West?

Bob: Well for me it's everything. I kind of got started in this field because I got sent to detention in high school. I was a big yacker and talker, talking in class, and the teachers would get exasperated with me, and believe it or not they sent me to the library. I would be in the library, and I didn't want to study or anything, but I'd get bored and so I went over and started looking at books. I saw these books on the Civil War, and of course Matthew Brady became an instant hero to me, because I could actually look at something that was illustrated, in this case a photograph, and I thought, "Man, those were actually dead people at Gettysburg." I was just hooked. Then when I would read *True West* magazine, you'd actually see the photos. Then I became enamored of Charlie Russell, and Frederick Remington, both icons of the West, and excellent illustrators, and they became my heroes. So when I started my tenure here at *True West* I had three goals: One is the best photographs we can find, scanned from the originals, not the third or fourth, tenth generation photos. I also wanted really good maps, and I wanted really good illustrations. Fortunately I'm an illustrator so we get a cheap product there because I end up doing a lot of the stuff, but not out of ego. I'd love to get some more artists in there, but usually out of just budget.

Steve: An iconic image of the West is the gunfight, and guns and gun fighting get ample coverage in *True West*. How dangerous really was it to live in the Wild West?

Bob: That's a very good question, and another topic that we argue about constantly here, and our readers do, too. I've seen statistical studies that show that Tombstone was not very dangerous at all, and if you extrapolate out the homicides and stuff it was really quite tame. But there's an old saying that there's lies, there's damn lies, and there's statistics. You know, these towns were violent. When violence happened, it was extremely violent. It was probably more violent between the towns. If you were out traveling, everyone out west went armed, because there were so many classes of robbers and just hatred, racial hatred, that it was a dangerous place to be. The towns, even though

Tombstone has a lot of legend to it, it probably wasn't that dangerous, in the broad picture. In fact, Wyatt Earp was interviewed in 1924 in a state case in Los Angeles and the attorney was kind of trying to suck up to him, and he said, "Hey, you were a marshal way back in the wild days at Tombstone, when it was a really rough place," and Wyatt Earp said, and I quote, "Not half as bad as L.A." He lived in L.A. at the time. I felt, well that's funny, here's a guy that thinks it's more dangerous in L.A. than it was in Tombstone.

Steve: What about the other dangers of life at the time and place, other than violence among people?

Bob: Well the thing I think really strikes a chord in all humanity, and why the Old West story is so universal is, when you were out west and you broke your leg, and you're out in the middle of nowhere, that was it. There was no 911, there was no air evacuation helicopters. The stories of courage about people . . . There was a young girl who was in a wagon train, I believe it was in Wyoming, and her father and several brothers went out hunting and they didn't come back. Then more people went to look for them, and she ended up being the only person there, and the other people never came back. She was there all alone, and then it snowed, and she tried to survive and finally I believe some native Americans came along and actually took her to safety. But what an incredible story! And they never found the people, they never found her family. So what an incredible mystery. What happened to them? How did they all die? But she was left alone and she survived. Now those are great stories.

Steve: Many stories must be lost because I get the impression from your magazine and other things I've read that there's not a lot of written records, that many activities were never recorded. Is that correct?

Bob: Well, it's about half correct. A lot of things weren't recorded, or [rather] we didn't know they were recorded. For example, take the Lincoln County War, the Billy the Kid story. When he started to rise in fame in the 1920's, there didn't seem to be a lot of written information, but then as time went on, in 1950 an Englishman named Frederick Nolan went to the movies and saw Johnny McBrown, I believe, as Billy the Kid, and was really enamored that there was an Englishman in this story. He called up on the telephone in London and found the Tunstall family, and come to find out they had John Tunstall's diary, and come to find out John Tunstall wrote down every day of his life, everything that he did. So that was published in 1950. Then about in 1960, turns out there was the Angel report, it was in the Smithsonian, and it interviewed Billy the Kid, and all these people about the killing of Tunstall, and on it goes. People keep finding all these reports. So there were really a lot of reports done, things in some cases almost too much. You know it's confusing when we go through the Custer inquiries, and the Reno Court of court-martial papers, and the OK Corral, there's all these conflicting reports. I used to

believe as a kid if I just found the right paper, the truth would come out. But what happens is it's more like peeling an onion, the further down you go, the more you start crying.

Steve: The *True West* web site claims that the magazine is bold and sometimes controversial. Can you share an example or two of things that you've published that have stirred controversy?

Bob: Well we've tackled them all. I mentioned earlier that we had an article on "Was Wyatt Earp a Pimp?" You know, a guy was looking in Peoria, Illinois, was looking for genealogy, on microfiche. He was looking and all of a sudden he found this newspaper item in 1872 that Wyatt Earp was arrested in a bagnio, which is a floating bordello. At first Earp lovers said "Oh, no, it was probably another Wyatt Earp." Then they found another article that Wyatt was arrested with his brother Morgan and that Wyatt was an old offender. Then researchers descended on Peoria, Illinois and discovered that Wyatt Earp was living in the whorehouse. So an article on "Was Wyatt Earp a Pimp?", you can imagine, upset quite a few people. But we thought the question had to be asked. We've also done on *Brokeback Mountain*, we did [an article on] is America ready for a gay western, and titled it "Homos on the Range," question mark. We've also done religion in the West, which is very controversial, and we feel that religion has gotten short shrift in the story. It's usually mocked or made fun of, because we really want our towns to be wild and untamed, but the fact of the matter is that the pecking order of the towns kind of goes like this: first the men show up, and it's a no holds barred world, and they're armed and they kill each other to try to carve out territory. Then the whores and the gamblers come and shake down the first group, and then the third wave is the wives who come along and bring religion and order and the town settles down. Now you can apply that, ironically, to any frontier, including the internet.

Steve: Interesting. *True West* is not indexed in the databases our history students use to find articles when they're writing a history paper. Do you think it should be?

Bob: Well that was a question our founder, Joe Small, wrestled with early on. But he finally made a distinction, and I agree with him. We're popular history. We're not for the footnote crowd, and if we're going to err, we're going to err on the side of popular reading. We want this to be accessible to everyone, as many people as possible, and there are plenty of places where people can get indexing or footnoting, but we're not one of them.

Steve: The advertisements in *True West* complement the magazine's theme. Do you refuse advertising from companies selling unrelated goods and services?

Bob: The short answer is no. But we've been very lucky. We've managed to corral, which is an apt metaphor, people who are compatible to our look and feel of the

magazine. One of the biggest things I try to protect is, when you're in the magazine, you don't want to leave that fantasy. I don't want to... I hated the old Gene Autry movies where Gene rode in a car and jumped off the running boards onto a wagon. I hated those. I think the car busts the bubble, the fantasy. So I really try to protect that image, the fantasy that you stay in that moment. When you go to that world you want to be in there, and you don't want to see ads for hearing aids or lawn mowers. Part of that is a function of we haven't gotten many ads like that to deal with. But we're blessed by the fact that everybody in the magazine is living that fantasy.

Steve: How important is advertising revenue for the survival of *True West*?

Bob: I can't overestimate it. Really all of our eggs are in that basket. That makes me nervous sometimes, because we really depend on the advertising to survive, and that was a real critical lesson that I learned early on. We were losing thirty thousand dollars a month when I bought the magazine. And man that'll wake you up. As a cartoonist, and an artist, and a rebel, and underground drummer, that was a frightening moment, and I had to learn very quickly what it is that was going to float this boat. It quickly became evident that we had to have good advertising staff. It took me many years, but we have a crack team now. Trish Brink is leading that charge along with Seth Hoyt, Joel Klasky, and Sue Lambert, and they're just excellent. They are the bedrock of our financial stability.

Steve: Do you have a significant audience overseas, Europeans for instance?

Bob: I wish we did. We don't. I have to be honest with you. I've heard ever since I took this over, I keep hearing, oh, the Germans love the Old West, the Japanese, you need to be over there, the English they love it, the Finns, you name it, I've heard it. But every time we've made an effort, the shipping is just prohibitive. We just can't get it over there without losing money, and so it hasn't been a priority. With the web now, we are starting to get more action from just really bizarre places, New Zealand for example.

Steve: Your headquarters are adjacent to Frontier Town in Cave Creek, Arizona. Does your location influence the magazine's content?

Bob: Hopefully it does. That's one of the reasons we brought it here, we really wanted to have a western home. The magazine bounced around the Midwest in the 70's and 80's, and was in Wisconsin for a short period. Although they tried really hard, I just think the magazine really got kind of watered down at that point. They had recipes, and it kind of had a Midwestern flavor. One of the things I really wanted to bring to the magazine is a really hard core, edgy western feeling and you can't do that, I don't believe, in the Midwest. For example, I'm sitting here right now looking out a window at a palo verde tree, ten saguaros, and a bunch of quail, rabbits that are running around. We've seen javalina, which are native pigs here, and deer and everything out this back window. I think that somehow seeps into the magazine.

Steve: One of the themes of the magazine, one of the topic areas, is historic preservation. The population of Arizona has really exploded. What's being lost amid all the growth?

Bob: Well, a lot of stuff is being lost, daily almost. As we become a world class state it, it's just incredible. They're predicting now that it's going to be urban all the way from Chino Valley in the North all the way to Sierra Vista in the south. That encompasses all the way through Prescott, all the way through Sedona, all the way to Phoenix, all the way to Tucson, and almost to the border. That's just going to be one urban core, and I believe the papers said there's only 15 miles in that entire swath that's not scheduled development in the next 10 years. That's a frightening development for people like myself who moved here in the 1950's when the state was wide open. You could be out on the road and you couldn't see a house in any direction. Those days are really almost gone now. There are very few places where you can't see housing tracts, or some sort of Taco Bell, or just some franchise thing. As that Old West evaporates, you've got to be careful. You have to save something, and that really became our goal the last several years. You know, I don't care what you save, but please save something.

Steve: Is True West Publishing partnering with any other organizations to help preserve history?

Bob: We actually are, and we're seeking out more organizations. We work very closely with Western History Association and also Western Writers of America. Paul Hutton, distinguished professor at the University of New Mexico, is one of our contributing editors and helps us be in touch. Also Vince Murray down at the Arizona Historical Society, and Bruce Dinges. We seek out anybody, partnerships with anybody who's trying to preserve the West, because we all have to work together, because if we don't work together, who will?

Steve: Do you look forward to continuing to run *True West*? Is it worth it to you? It must be an awful lot of work.

Bob: You know, it is, and also, just again to be brutally honest, there are days I wake up and go, "What the heck am I doing? I'm a cartoonist, I'm the CEO of a company, this isn't gonna work!" But most of the time, I come to work like today, I look up, I see "*True West* magazine since 1953" on the roof of the True West building, I walk inside, I've got a great staff, and I really come down to the bottom line, which is work is only work if you'd rather be somewhere else. And I don't want to be anywhere else. I'm right where I want to be.

Steve: What are the greatest challenges of the job?

Bob: My biggest challenge is circulation, because we have a tsunami on our hands here with the internet. Magazines across the board are suffering. Newsstand [sales] decline

because people are spending more and more time online, for example, listening to this interview. I know a therapist who told me that one of the biggest problems now in couples is they come in and they say “My husband sits on the couch and he watches TV and then during the commercials he has the laptop and he surfs the web.” This is a new problem in marital relationships, and I’m going, you know, they’re not picking up a magazine, they’re surfing the web.

Steve: Do you see a future for *True West* as a web product?

Bob: Yes, I do. In fact, we’re developing a new web site even as we speak, and we’re going to have much more of a dynamic site, and it is the future of the world, really, don’t you think?

Steve: Perhaps. We serials librarians do discuss that a great deal. There are a number of people who do still want a print product in their hands. But I . . . it’s very hard to predict which way things will go.

Bob: Well we still believe in our core business, which is the magazine, and we don’t plan on stopping that. I’m a print junkie, and I love magazines, I still love newspapers. But it is going to drastically change the landscape, and Bob Brink, who’s our consultant who ran Hearst for 26 years, he constantly reminds us that no new media has ever killed an old medium. They said that TV would kill radio, they said radio would kill newspapers, they said videotapes would kill movies, and none of that’s been true. It’s just created a new avenue of platforms for dispensing media. We’ve got to learn, though, to survive in this dense field of competition, and that’s our biggest challenge.

Steve: Bob Boze Bell, is there anything else that you’d like to add that we haven’t discussed?

Bob: Well, I wish anybody listening would check us out at twmag.com, and if they know of anybody--I really want to get youth involved--if people know nephews or sons or daughters who they think might be interested in history, it would be great if they would send them a subscription, get them involved in history. This is a fun way to do that. Hopefully that will send them to the library.

Steve: Very well. Bob Boze Bell, thank you very much for being my guest on Periodical Radio.

Bob: My pleasure.

Steve: To subscribe to *True West* magazine, call 888-687-1881, or go on the web to twmag.com. A one year subscription is \$29.95. Thank you for listening to this installment of Periodical Radio. I’m your host, Steve Black.

13: *American Legacy*

Interview with Audrey Peterson, Editor, October 2007

This installment of Periodical Radio is about *American Legacy*, a quarterly magazine celebrating African-American history and culture. The magazine's web site states that

"*American Legacy* publishes African-American history and culture, factually and positively; material that is both informative and inspirational. With content of substance...no fluff, no hype, no shallowness, but a historical chronicling of accomplishments achieved; hardships endured, obstacles overcome; the overall effect: positive and uplifting, enriching our readers' sense of being."

American Legacy began publication in 1996. It is an attractive, colorful magazine enhanced with many photographs. The advertisements are predominantly full page ads that feature images of African Americans. *American Legacy* is inexpensive, with a \$3 newsstand price and a \$9.95 annual subscription price.

To learn more about *American Legacy*, my guest is Editor Audrey M. Peterson.

Steve: Audrey, welcome to Periodical Radio.

Audrey: Well, thank you for having me.

Steve: Rodney J. Reynolds founded *American Legacy* in 1996. Can you tell us a little about Mr. Reynold's motivations and ambitions for the magazine?

Audrey: Sure. He founded the magazine, he actually had started several magazines more on a local basis in Cleveland. He's out of Cleveland originally. He realized that there was definitely a market of people of color, Black readers, specifically African Americans, out there that were not getting the full round of materials in other media. So he had a men's magazine at one point, then it was sort of a family magazine, then it was kind of an Ohio/Cleveland history magazine. He had the idea of creating a more national African American magazine of history and culture. He worked with Forbes, Inc., presented a plan, and we've been told that it's rare that they would actually go in with someone, but the plan was solid. A lot of the basis of the plan was to distribute it for free in churches, schools, and other nonprofit institutions, because our reader base is very church oriented, in terms of the Black church. So it was a ready set way of distribution, where you have the full attention, because a lot of the congregants will listen to their pastor. We have a full captive audience. But the motivation behind the actual magazine itself was to bring forward a lot of the stuff that just did not get into the history books. I know when I was growing up, I'm 45 years old, and I know when I was growing up, we had teachers who added to the curriculum, happily. But if you opened up any of your school books, there

was not a lot of specific black history in the books. So that was our original motivation, and we're still doing that.

Steve: There's a line in your writer's guidelines that states "we like to think that black history in America is more than just the period between 1861 and 1965."

Audrey: This is true.

Steve: Can you elaborate a little for us what that means?

Audrey: Sure. In fact, a lot of the history that we didn't get, black history that we didn't get in the history books, is the history when the first Africans, approximately, set foot on the North American continent. There's this whole couple of centuries of black history before there was a Civil War. Even prior to the antebellum slavery period that we often hear about, we have the revolutionary war, members of the Revolutionary War, and you have craftsmen, and you have pioneers. After the Civil Rights movement, this is an important time period, certainly, and we would never say that it's not, but I think that we tend to focus on these two points. Even within those two genres and topics, there are a lot of things that we don't hear about, like black Confederates, blacks who actually owned slaves, but it was a whole different kind of situation for a black to own a slave during the antebellum period. People who were part of the civil rights movement who weren't in the foreground, they were in the background, those kind of lesser-known stories.

Steve: I see. You explained that your readers, the core of your readership, are attendees of black churches? Who else are your readers? Is that exclusively the audience?

Audrey: No, that's not exclusively the audience. We have paid subscribers, and they come from, I mean I can tell you our demographic is about 67% female, to 33% male, and the median age is early to mid 40's, although we look at 35 plus. It's people of all stripes—students, professionals, home keepers. Yes, a lot of them do attend church, but we have a pretty wide audience. People who are not of color, I get letters from them. So it's a pretty wide audience.

Steve: Do you have a sense of what portion of the audience is not individuals of color?

Audrey: It's a small portion, but it's growing. It's growing, I think I get more and more letters, and I've been the editor here for nine years. I'm getting more and more letters, and I'm pleased to get more letters, because that's one of the things, our mandate is to try to teach people and reach people in the sense that African American and black history is inextricably intertwined with our mainstream history. One didn't happen without the other, and vice versa. It's such a part of the fabric of American history, that it almost sometimes feels funny kind of separating it out, but the reason it was separated out was because it was left out. If you go through the pages of our magazine, there are white

people and people of other races in it all the time, because you can't separate that out. There would be no stories, really. The same goes for my writing staff. The authors are people of many colors, many ages.

Steve: That leads me to my next question. I'd like to ask about your writers. Your writer's guidelines suggest that instead of submitting finished articles, the writers should send a one or two page proposal. Why do you ask for proposals instead of manuscripts?

Audrey: Well, we do take manuscripts, so if you have a completed manuscript that you've already completed without any communication with me, and hey, that would work great for *American Legacy*, we're always happy to read the manuscripts. But the way we work is that we make assignments. I've had a couple of times, I've had to be very specific about where people have gone out, and I've said, "Oh, why don't you send a proposal, and we'll look at that and see if we can make an assignment." But they don't really hear all that. They go out, write the article, send it over to me, and then "When can I put my invoice in?" We haven't even discussed anything! Anything, really. It's just a formal way of actually accepting an assignment, it's the first step toward that.

Steve: Can you explain for our listeners just what the assignment process is?

Audrey: Yes, sure. Usually what happens, if I don't call a writer, and sometimes I do call writers, and say, "Look, I have this topic, I think you would be great for it. Would you like to write about it, would you accept this assignment?" We negotiate a fee, it's a basic fee, and then we also figure out a deadline, it's usually 3 months for us. We're a quarterly, so we figure three months is a good amount of time. We write an assignment letter, to send along with the contracts. They sign the contracts and send them back within the period of time specified. They give me the manuscript, we read it, we make some adjustments sometimes. That's written into the contract that there might be a little rewriting or what have you. Once we get an okay that those adjustments can be made, we accept that manuscript, and an invoice is put in for them to be paid for the manuscript. So payment is not on publication, it's on acceptance that we pay.

Steve: I see. Let's go back to the proposal for just a moment. When someone does send a proposal, in your mind, what's the perfect proposal, one that gets you excited about carrying it through to being published in the magazine.

Audrey: The perfect proposal, first of all, is rarely longer than a page, but sometimes it's two pages. It's like a little mini story, you know, where you get a little taste of what's to come. Obviously, written well. I mean, if there's a typo, I'm not going to throw a perfectly good proposal away, but you can usually tell when someone hasn't really proofread, and these are writers. So if you can't write a proposal, how would I expect you to write an article for the magazine, you know? I'm not hard core, but I do, but I'm hard enough to know that it should be well written, pretty concise, kind of give a taste of the

story itself, and there should be some passion in it. I should be able to tell that this is a topic that you've been interested in. This isn't just something that you pulled out of the air so you could make some money, and that you have knowledge about it, that you have researched it, and I can tell it's researched. It's interesting, because having been in this as long as I have, I can tell when things are pulled from internet sources, quickly and patched together, and when somebody has done really good primary research.

Steve: Are you on the lookout for unique stories?

Audrey: Sure! And I think sometimes it's just unique in itself, the topic. We had one woman write a piece about a black man who was a silversmith in Philadelphia in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and that's a unique story. But sometimes there are unique twists on a story. For instance, a lot of people already know the story about Jesse Owens, who won gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics. That's a story that's been told and retold, but we have a writer who's working on a story about him and his relationship with Lutz Long, who was a German track star and long jumper who became friends with Owens during his time in Germany, and who he remained friends with. There's this whole story that goes behind it. There's a behind the scenes story about why Jesse Owens ran and another black runner ran a relay race that two white Jewish guys were supposed to be running. So there's all these little behind the scenes little stories that can come out of well known stories, too.

Steve: Do you have any other favorite stories that have been published in the magazine?

Audrey: Oh, wow [laughing], that's asking a lot!

Steve: Can you share just a few?

Audrey: I'll tell you, it's funny, and this was prior to when I started here. I started in the Fall of 1998 at *American Legacy*. Prior to that, there was a story published about a man named Melvin B. Tolson who started a debate club at a black college called Wiley College. This debate club became so good that they toured around, and they won debates with a lot of the Ivy League schools. I always thought it was a great story. I had read it prior to coming here, and in fact when I did my interview for this job, one of the questions was, "What are some of your favorite stories?" That was my top one, and it really pleased the editor who was interviewing me, because that was her favorite, too, so it might have helped in my favor. It's now actually been picked up by Harpo Productions, and Harpo Productions and Denzel Washington are doing a movie called "The Great Debaters" based on Melvin Tolson. They actually contacted us. It's funny, because a great story is just a great story, you know. It's just recognizable as such. They contacted us because they wanted to get in touch with the author and get some of his primary sources and that sort of thing. It's funny, because I have my favorites, but then there are just certain ones that stand out, regardless. That's just one of many.

Steve: Many of your articles include photographs, many historical photographs. Is getting permission from the copyright holder ever difficult for the photos that you run?

Audrey: Yes!

Steve: Can you explain that for us?

Audrey: Yes, and there are pictures that didn't run because we couldn't get permission. For instance, we did a piece on Gordon Parks, the late, great Gordon Parks. I did an interview with him, and it was a photo essay and also an excerpt from his autobiography. One of his four or five autobiographies. He had a long life, so he had to keep writing them! There was a lot on Getty images, which owns Time-Life images. He worked for *Life* magazine for some time, so there was a lot that they owned, so we could license from them. Then there were a lot in the Library of Congress that were high resolution, publishable images that they owned because he worked in one of FDR's Works Progress Administration programs, I think either the Farm Security Administration, or one of those programs where they gave work to artists and other people.

Steve: But then the government owned the copyright.

Audrey: Right, the government owned the copyright, and they were happy with it being in public domain, so those were fine. But then there was this one photograph that I really wanted to put in the magazine because some of his excerpts talked about going to Harlem at one point and becoming friendly with gang members so that he could photograph them. This was a group of gang members fighting in the street, and he got a picture of it. Well, it resides at Art Resource. You can go to Art Resource, but they have to get permission, you have to get separate permission from the copyright holder. At that point it was a woman who was Mr. Park's assistant. It turned out, I didn't know the backstory, she was very, very, very tied up, because he was ill. There were a lot of other things that she had to attend to, so she couldn't get back to us in time with a confirmed e-mail or a letter saying "Yes, you can use this picture." Because of that, Art Resource could not give us the high resolution file, so we couldn't print it. That was a shame, because that was a really wonderful illustrative picture, but when you can't get it, you can't get it. We have more trouble, not so much with the stock companies and things like that, but with photographs that are held in private collections, and things like that, because you really have to hunt people down, I mean sometimes I really just even pull out the phone book.

Steve: So it's not necessarily an issue of them saying no, it's an issue of being able to contact them at all . . .

Audrey: Right.

Steve: . . .and get an answer at all.

Audrey: Right. We did an article on Elizabeth Catlett, the painter and engraver, and she is covered by a group called VAGA International, and it turns out they cover a lot of artists. It's helpful. They sent me a database of all the artists they cover, so if I have to check, I'll check there first. That's helpful because you just call them up. It's not cheap, but it's available, you're able to get these things. Often you can also figure out what gallery an artist is represented by, and they're happy to get back to you fairly quickly, because anything to promote the artist they're working with is a good thing for them. But it's the private collections, things like that. I mean we just did an article on this group of men called the Triple Nickles, who went to paratrooper school during World War II, but they were never actually allowed to be paratroopers, so they were smoke jumpers instead. The one descent – the book was written by an ex-Triple Nickle. He had a lot of his private pictures in there, but he's passed away. We didn't know who contact, or how to get in contact with whoever might have those pictures, or might not. So that's where it becomes difficult.

Steve: Audrey, I think I'll change focus a little now. That's all been very interesting, but I want to go on to some of the other content of your publication. Can you tell our listeners about the Women of Strength and Courage Awards?

Audrey: Sure. Every year we pick five or six women who we feel have demonstrated strength and courage, mostly, in various fields, and who have made a vast contribution to black history and American history and history in general.

Steve: I see. And there's now a Men of Honor of Distinction and Honor ceremony annually as well, correct?

Audrey: Yes, yes. This will be our second year that we're having it, I think it's on November 29th if I'm not mistaken. My publisher, Rodney Reynolds, decided that he really felt that, because I always tease him and say, "Oh, you know, there's always men in the magazine," I have to spend a little extra time having more women. That's just the nature of the beast, because much of history is written by men, and the way culture and history have played out, women have had a great role, but it's not always acknowledged. Which is why we started the Women of Strength and Courage just to acknowledge these history makers while they're alive. The Men of Honor and Distinction, it has a different...Rodney Reynolds had a different reason for putting that together. He really felt that there needs to be reachable mentors for young black men, and the black youth. They need to be able to have access to them. What's a component of both the Women of Strength and Courage and Men of Honor and Distinction is that we do a panel discussion, a workshop type thing with young people in the morning. So they come in and for an hour and a half or so the women in Women of Strength and Courage and men in Men of Honor and Distinction talk about what they do, and there is a discussion, a back and forth where they field questions. They get to come up and talk to these people one on one.

We've had a girl get into a college because spoke with--I can't remember whether it was Nikki Giovanni, one of the people who were educators on top of being artists--and because of that direct one on one contact and the individual was moved by the young girl and her story. We had another young man last year who stood up and said, "I just don't have any role model." So ex-mayor David Dinkins, was like, "I'm you're role model, come up here and talk with me and let's exchange information." So there's this kind of lovely personal contact that happens, which is my favorite. That's my favorite part of the whole day, is the morning workshops. Then we have the luncheon for the women and for the Men of Honor of Distinction an evening kind of affair.

Steve: So I get the overall impression that the magazine and these efforts, the real purpose isn't to make money. You have another purpose. I'm mean, with the three dollar cover price I'm not surprised.

Audrey: We also don't take liquor or cigarette ads. My boss made rule from the start. If we did, I would have a very expensive car [laughs]. But we made it, it was part of his plan that it just wouldn't happen. It isn't about making money. I mean, yeah, of course we all have to eat and pay rent and that sort of thing, but we all, everyone on the staff has an incredible passion for spreading the news and getting the word out and working with the community. We do a lot of events, health fairs and geneology workshops and that kind of thing to be out there with the community. I've sat at tables and passed out magazines and that sort of thing, and it's great to meet readers in the public.

Steve: Now that sort of thing is not the first thing I would associate with Forbes, Inc. Can you tell us about that relationship and how it works, and how it benefits your efforts.

Audrey: Well, sure. First of all, before Rodney was able to make his deal with the Forbes, Forbes had for some time, I can't remember when they did, but they purchased *American Heritage*, which I'm sure you've been familiar with.

Steve: Yes.

Audrey: They were already in the business of doing a history magazine, so this wasn't anything that was too foreign to them. In fact, it wasn't foreign at all. At that time Tim Forbes was president of *American Heritage* magazine, he hadn't come over to Forbes to become I believe the COO now, but don't quote me on that. They had already had the mechanism in place for producing a history magazine, so when Rodney made his pitch and they realized that we had a ready-made audience, they thought hey this might work. What happened is, is that it's Forbes, but it was Forbes under the auspices of American Heritage, Inc. Just starting off they kind of mined the staff of *American Heritage* and kind of approached them and said, could we have one of the senior editors work with Rodney to put together a test magazine. They really wanted to test it out first, and get a response before they really full steam ahead. It went so well that she then took over the

editor's position until I got there, and until they realized that it was making a profit and that we could have a more full staff. That's when I came on board as the associate editor, etc., etc.

Steve: My understanding is that *American Heritage* is being cut loose by Forbes.

Audrey: Yes, it is.

Steve: Is that still correct?

Audrey: Yes, that's still correct as far as I know.

Steve: How is that going to affect you, or will it, do you know?

Audrey: Rodney had already been in negotiations with Forbes well before it was announced that *American Heritage* was ceasing publication, with buying out their portion of *American Legacy*. We are in the final stages of that, actually. We will be moving to different premises, because right now we're in a Forbes building, not in the flagship, but up the street where forbes.com is. But we will be moving, and we'll be moving forward. The benefit to having worked with the Forbes has been that they do have the resources, everything in place to really get the magazine started. There are just so many aspects of publishing a magazine that if you've been doing it for years, it's a breeze [laughs]. You really do need venture capital and people who are willing commit to helping you publish the magazine, often when it's something that's new, and not something that's been in place like an *Ebony* or an *Essence* for years and you're just taking it over. There's been a tremendous advantage working with them. It was just, you know the *American Heritage* staff and everybody were always really great people. Richard Snow, who was the editor in chief of *American Heritage*, is somebody I admire greatly, and I've learned an incredible amount. It's been like a post-doctoral program in magazine editing working with him. So the next step is cutting loose and moving forward.

Steve: Well, I wish your magazine great luck, it's a very attractive magazine. Believe it or not our time is nearly up.

Audrey: Oh wow, that was great, I really enjoyed speaking with you.

Steve: I very much enjoyed talking with you as well, Audrey, thank you very much.

Audrey: Thank you.

Steve: If you are interested in subscribing to *American Legacy*, visit their web site at <http://www.americanlegacymag.com/>. Thank you for listening to this installment of Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

14: Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Interview with Dr. Steve Taylor, Syracuse University, Editor, October 2007

This installment of Periodical Radio is about the scholarly journal *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*. This is a new name for a journal published since 1963 as *Mental Retardation*. There is a story behind the name change, a story I'll let my guest tell.

The journal is a bimonthly publication of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Each issue contains three to five research articles written in the style prescribed by the American Psychological Association. Issues also include sections titled "Perspectives," "Book Reviews," and "Trends and Milestones." As is typical with scholarly journals, *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* is available both online and in print.

My guest is Dr. Steven Taylor, Editor of *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* and professor at the Center on Human Policy and the School of Education at Syracuse University.

Steve: Dr. Taylor, welcome to Periodical Radio.

Dr. Taylor: Thank you.

Steve: Let's begin with the recent change in the name of the journal and the association. Why the change from *Mental Retardation* to *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*?

Dr. Taylor: This has a long history of debates about the language we use. But the long and short of it is "mental retardation" has become pejorative. People use, for example, the word "retard" as a generic epithet. So the name was changed largely for that reason.

Steve: I see. I don't know about very much about this area. What's the distinction between intellectual disabilities and development disabilities?

Dr. Taylor: "Developmental disability" is a broader term that refers to people who acquired disabilities at a young age, at the so-called developmental age. It can include people with physical disabilities, such as cerebral palsy. "Intellectual disabilities," as the name suggests, refers to people who are slow in learning. It doesn't mean they can't learn, but that learn at a slower rate than other people. So "developmental" is a broader term, "intellectual" is a specific term that refers to people with intellectual disabilities, the people we used to call "mentally retarded". There's such a long history of language in this field. Before that, people were called mental defectives, and before that they were the feeble minded, and before that they were idiots, imbeciles, and morons. If you follow the

history of this field, and people in this field say it all the time, we continue to come up with new professional terminology that over time becomes negative and stigmatizing. So the shift to “intellectual disabilities” was long in coming for what was previously the American Association on Mental Retardation and the journal *Mental Retardation*. It was really prompted by the objections of many people who have been labeled mentally retarded. Families find that terminology just so offensive today. The question, the debates we have, is it the language that’s stigmatizing, or is it the broader society’s stereotypes? We’ll continue to stereotype people as long as we devalue them based on their presumed intellectual ability.

Steve: What disciplines are represented in your journal?

Dr. Taylor: It’s a somewhat unique journal, in the sense that it is very interdisciplinary. But I’d have to go back to give you the context for it. What’s now the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities was established in the latter part of the 1800’s as an organization of superintendents of asylums for idiots. Originally it was very medically dominated, the association. Then in the early 1900’s psychology became more prominent, so psychologists became involved in the field. More recently it’s become a much broader field. My own background is sociology, not psychology or medicine. We have members of the association and subscribers to the journal who come from a full range academic disciplines. Some are more clinically oriented: nursing, physical therapy, special education, medicine, psychology. But there is a growing number of people with backgrounds in law and public policy. A relatively recent event, given the long history of the field, is that today we have laws to protect the rights of people with disabilities, including people with intellectual disabilities. We have a right to education, we have the Americans with Disabilities Act, so attorneys and policy makers are now interested in the field. There are historians who are interested, and people with backgrounds in philosophy. As I said, my own background is as a sociologist, and I’ve tried to encourage submissions from people in the social sciences to the journal. From my vantage point, my interest is not necessarily studying people with intellectual disabilities themselves, but more studying intellectual disabilities as social and cultural phenomena. For example, public attitudes towards people, you know, the representation of people with various forms of disabilities in popular culture and in the media, in television, movies and so on. It really is a diverse field. One of the things I’ve tried to do as editor of the journal, and I’ve been doing this for quite a while, 1993 I started, I’ve tried to encourage submissions of manuscripts from people who have new and unique perspectives on the field.

Steve: There was a recent “Perspectives” piece in June 2007 by Robert Perske.

Dr. Taylor: Oh, yes.

Steve: He outlined some of the quite profound changes over the last century in attitudes toward persons with intellectual disabilities. Could you tell us a little about those attitudes and how they've changed? You've alluded to them, but could you talk a little bit more about the changes over the century?

Dr. Taylor: You know, the history of the field has changed rapidly. I'll go back quite a while to the mid eighteenth hundreds, which was really when the field was developed. Before that time, people with various disabilities were kind of lumped in together. There weren't distinctions between people we would call intellectually disabled and people today we would call, or characterize as having psychiatric disabilities. Back then, and the terminology is, you know, offensive. Back then idiots and the insane were kind of mixed up together. In the mid-eighteen hundreds, distinctions started to be made between different disability groups. The first efforts, the professional efforts, were mainly educational in nature. It was an optimistic period in the mid-1800's. By the latter part of the 1800's, early 1900's, societal attitudes changed radically, and the emphasis shifted from educating people to, quite frankly, social control. There was a whole social movement, somewhat well known today, the "eugenics" movement, that was designed to prevent what was seen as the transmission of defective genes. I mean the theories at the time were that we had inferior people who were procreating, spreading their genes, and all kinds of disabilities were kind of associated in that, especially what was called "feeble-mindedness" at the time was associated with crime and vice and all kinds of social ills. It's a long and complex history that reflects to some extent waves of immigration in the latter part of the 1800's, early 1900's. The fact was with people coming to this country who did not share the basic Anglo-Saxon culture and they did not speak English, and they were viewed as inferior. Literally, there was a movement to give immigrants IQ tests that were just being developed to try to sort out people who would be bringing these supposed defective genes into the country. The irony is the tests were given in English to people who didn't speak English. There was an element of racism in all of this, either racism or discrimination against certain ethnic groups. Immigrants in the latter 1800's, early 1900's increasingly were coming from southern and eastern Europe, not western Europe, which was the dominant ethnic group in America. There was a lot of concern about this, in some cases bordering on hysteria about the defective people coming into the country. The response was to develop a series of social control measures, where people were institutionalized, often in the name of doing something for them. The reality was that it was to keep them off the streets, keep them out of the community. So we developed the institutions. There were a series of involuntary sterilization laws passed. The figures are not precise, but something like 27,000 people with intellectual disabilities were involuntarily sterilized to keep them from procreating. There were restrictive marriage laws. Certain categories of people, both ethnically and based on disability were excluded from being able to emigrate. So we went through this very, very dark period of history.

Steve: What then caused the shift away sort of a eugenics model to a more compassionate model?

Dr. Taylor: Well what really killed eugenics in this country, it rears its ugly head once in a while, was Nazi Germany. The first people who were murdered in Nazi Germany, and on whom the mass extermination techniques were perfected, were people in mental institutions. Both people with intellectual and psychiatric disabilities, hundreds of thousands of them were killed in Nazi Germany. I think there was such revulsion to what happened in Nazi Germany, and what happened to Jewish people, gypsies, so on and so forth, that a lot of these eugenics theories were just utterly discredited, because of the Nazis. When the Nazis started killing people in institutions, as I said they perfected the gas chamber, they would send people into showers and then gas them to death. The Germans behind that effort cited American literature from earlier in the 1900's to justify that. So that was a bit of a turning point. Other critical events that happened—because of the assumption that feeble-mindedness, mental deficiency, mental retardation, whatever, because of the assumption that it was always hereditary, you know, family members, it was stigmatizing to be a family member. That started to change in the late 1950's, and continued throughout the 50's and into the 60's. So you had family members coming out, like Pearl Buck was a very well known author at the time, who happened to have a daughter with mental retardation. She wrote about that. Then in the early 60's the Kennedy family, you know JFK's sister happened to have what was called mental retardation. The Kennedy family was public about that, and addressed the issue of mental retardation. After that, family members then could, parents and other family members could come out publicly and start advocating for their sons and daughters. Then most recently, there's a whole movement of people with intellectual disabilities who are so-called self advocates. They've organized groups to change public policies. Today things aren't perfect. There's growing acceptance, and at least, occasionally in TV programs, movies, in popular culture, you'll see people with Down Syndrome, for example. Increasingly it's no big deal. People with all forms of disabilities are much more visible in society today. We still have a lot of negative public attitudes to overcome. The belief that if you have an intellectual disability, and I use that term because it's less offensive. There will come a point in time where that is pejorative, that's what we've learned over history. But you see people with mental retardation, they're working, they hold jobs, they're living in the community. They're no longer predominantly just put away in institutions. We've come a long way, we have a lot farther to come. Anyway, to go back to the journal, one of the things I've tried to do as journal editor, and if you've seen the journal, there will be research articles in there, but I created this whole section of the journal that is called "Perspectives" where I want thoughtful commentary from thoughtful people. I think we can learn a lot, not just through traditional research, but reflecting on where we've been and where we're going. That's where the Perske article comes in. You know, Bob Perske is someone I've known for years. He's been very active

in the field, yet he actually has a background in religion, and that's how he got involved in the field, as a chaplain at an institution way back in the 1960's. Now he's become a strong advocate for the rights of people with intellectual disabilities. He's now a professional writer. Writers, people with backgrounds in the humanities, can contribute. The field historically, in my opinion, was just too narrowly dominated by clinical, medical, psychological perspectives. We have to look at intellectual disability as a broader social and cultural phenomenon. In the same way, the analogy, and people don't always get the analogy. Today we study race, ethnicity, gender today in ways very different from the way all those issues were studied before.

Steve: I wanted to ask you, the association also publishes the *American Journal on Mental Retardation*. I think this addresses that point. Why have two journals for the one association?

Dr. Taylor: Historically, well, two things. If you read *American Journal on Mental Retardation*, and it still has that name, by the way, which is interesting. It's much more, almost exclusively, oriented to medicine and psychology and much more basic kind of research. *Mental Retardation*, when it was founded first in 1963, was designed to be more of an applied journal, a journal that published research, but a more practical kind of research, and applied research that would be of value to people in the field. In my opinion, we need all kinds of research. Sometimes we learn things from basic medical research, but we also need research that's more relevant to the issues of today. As I said, since I became editor in the early 1990's, I kind of broadened that applied mission to really encourage thoughtful commentaries and essays on the field. So I've kind of gone from an applied research focus, it still has that, but it's broadened in terms of emphasis of the journal.

Steve: I have a question about the actual production of your journal. It's done in conjunction with Allen Press. Can you describe for our listeners what Allen Press does, and how their services help you publish the journal?

Dr. Taylor: I'll explain what I know. The way the association works and the journal works is, you know, my job is to be editor, which means I coordinate the review process, I make final editorial decisions on manuscripts as to whether they're accepted for publication or not. After that, the production process has always been in the hands of the central office of the American Association on Mental Retardation, now American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. I'm glad, I have my hands full just doing the editorial process, working with authors, helping them to strengthen their articles. So the publication process has always been handled by the Association, and now they've contracted with Allen Press to handle the production of the journal. Now where it has an impact on me as an editor, is that we've moved to a web-based

submission system that is through Allen Press. When I started, in the old way of doing this, a manuscript would be mailed to me. As an editor, the first question I have, and the first decision I have to make, is what kinds of people would be good to review this manuscript? Since it's an interdisciplinary journal, I make sure that I have reviewers who have relevant expertise. So I do publish historical pieces, and I want people with backgrounds in history to review those, or sociology, or law and public policy, whatever it is, I want reviewers from those fields to evaluate the articles. Anyway, once I select the reviewers, then the manuscripts are sent out in the mail, then sometime later reviews are mailed back. Then I integrate the reviewers' recommendations and mail a decision letter. Another thing about the publication process is manuscripts are almost never accepted as is. The role of an editor is to work with authors to make their manuscripts stronger, if they're acceptable to begin with. Anyway, that was the old system. Right now, through Allen Press, and they have this web based system called AllenTrack, authors submit via the web, then I get a notice that the manuscript has been received, and then I select the reviewers, and they are immediately sent the manuscript via e-mail. There are automatic reminders to reviewers, saying your review is late, we need your review. When the manuscript goes out to them, there's an opportunity to decline if they're too busy. Their reviews are submitted electronically. Then once I have all of the reviews in, typically three, sometimes I'll decide on two if a third reviewer never submitted something. My decision letter is sent electronically. What it means from my vantage point as an editor is it cuts several weeks off the decision making process. It's very efficient, because I'm not relying now on the mail. I've found X percentage of mail never gets through, so the electronic system is much more efficient.

Steve: Dr. Taylor, what do you enjoy best about the job of editing the journal?

Dr. Taylor: Two things. One is, the Association gave me the opportunity when I became editor, I wanted to introduce new features, like the "Perspectives" section, and like the article by Bob Perske. You mentioned it, and you don't have to answer this, but my guess is that even though you're not in this field, you could read Bob's article and basically understand what he was talking about. I wanted people in the field to be exposed. Bob Perske, as I say, has been in the field forever. He never published in any of the professional journals, because his writing wasn't suitable, it wasn't the typical research writing. Again, I have nothing against researchers, I am one, but I want to expose readers to different points of view from thoughtful, critical thinkers. I did that, and introduced some other features. The other thing, quite frankly, most editors I know, one of the most fulfilling aspects is especially working with young authors. I mean the person who just got her or his Ph.D., for example. They did their dissertation, and now they want to publish journal articles. One of the things, very often, in graduate school you're taught to write papers in a certain way, or to write a dissertation or thesis. You're really not taught to take a lot of information and boil it down into a journal article. They don't know how

to frame an article. It's fulfilling, I think, to most editors to work with someone who has something important to say, but they haven't figured out how to say it. So working with authors through multiple revisions, and helping them to frame their articles, to tighten their reasoning, to supply details that the readers will want to know. The other thing, since as I said, the journal has been designed to be applied, my question always is when I read an article, or when something comes in is, "who cares about this, who's going to read it?" Very often, new authors, they have something to say, but they can't explain why readers should be interested in it. That's one of the most fulfilling parts of being an editor, is feeling like you've had an impact, and you've helped someone contribute to our knowledge and our understanding. You know it's their work, it's their ideas, but they just need help shaping it.

Steve: Dr. Taylor, thank you very much for being my guest here on Periodical Radio. Our half hour is already done, believe it or not.

Dr. Taylor: Okay, fine.

Steve: Thank you very much.

Dr. Taylor: Sure. Bye!

Information about *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, including how to subscribe, is online at www.aaidd.org. Thank you for listening to this installment of Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

15: *Journal of the History of Ideas*

Interview with Dr. Warren Breckman, University of Pennsylvania, Co-executive Editor, October 2007

The subject of this installment of Periodical Radio is the *Journal of the History of Ideas*. This quarterly scholarly journal is published by the University of Pennsylvania Press. It is a forum for research in intellectual history. The journal defines intellectual history broadly, including the histories of philosophy, of literature and the arts, of the natural and social sciences, of religion, and of political thought. Each issue contains approximately eight research articles, plus a briefly annotated list of books received by the editors.

The *Journal of the History of Ideas* has arranged editing in a somewhat unusual way, having four Executive Editors. They are Anthony Grafton of Princeton, Martin J. Burke of the City University of New York, Ann E. Moyer of the University of Pennsylvania, and my guest, Dr. Warren Breckman. Dr. Breckman is associate professor of modern European intellectual and cultural history at the University of Pennsylvania.

Steve: Dr. Breckman, welcome to Periodical Radio.

Dr. Breckman: Thank you.

Steve: The *Journal of the History of Ideas* was founded by Arthur Lovejoy in 1940. Can you tell us about Dr. Lovejoy and his vision for the journal?

Dr. Breckman: Certainly. Arthur Lovejoy was an American who did most of his studies in America, but among other things, spent a considerable amount of time in Germany. In Germany he was exposed to the kind of grand tradition of the history of philosophy as practiced by the Germans. This was something that he brought back to America when he became professor of philosophy at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore. The idea of a history of ideas actually predates the journal. In roughly 1920, 1921 he created the History of Ideas Club, which brought together humanists, scientists, medical doctors, etc., all united really by a passion for the history of intellectual life. This was in some ways already a model for what would later become the *Journal of the History of Ideas*. One of the really interesting things about the journal and its founding was that from the very beginning it was seen as thoroughly interdisciplinary. Lovejoy published a kind of manifesto in the first issue where he presents the history of ideas as almost a kind of synthetic discipline that can bind together the otherwise fragmented disciplines. So from its very inception, the journal has been seen as reaching across disciplines, looking at in some ways the foundational ideas of the disciplines themselves. It's also been from its inception global in its reach, or at least in its ambition, and also global in its chronological reach. We publish articles

from classic scholars on Greece and Rome, we publish things on China, India, etc., as well as Europe and America.

Steve: When I was perusing the journal, it seemed to me to be rather Eurocentric. Did I misread it? Is it still rather Eurocentric, and do you want to expand?

Dr. Breckman: As I said, in the manifesto that Lovejoy published in the first issue, he talked about a global history of ideas, and this has unfortunately to some extent a desire rather than a reality. We are really trying to correct this. The journal had been in the hands Donald Kelly, who'd been at Rochester, then moved to Rutgers. He did an absolutely wonderful job as editor. Four of us have taken over the journal, and we've had it now for just a little over two years. We are really committed to expanding its coverage, and doing that in a very aggressive way. One of the things that I think can accelerate that process is to bring people onto the editorial board, and that's something that we've done already. So we've added a Chinese specialist, and we've got someone from Argentina who's a Latin American scholar. We've added a colleague of mine at Penn who works on Southeast Asia. These are steps that can broadcast a message out to the larger academic community. Also by bringing people onto the editorial board we start to, in a sense, mobilize their networks. So hopefully that's going to generate some sort of shift in the journal's coverage, and to some extent it already has. For example, the editorial board member from Argentina has contributed a wonderful essay on a Brazilian thinker, Roberto Schwartz. Our Chinese intellectual historian is going to write a large review essay for us. Just yesterday I was looking at a very interesting article about a 20th century Chinese philosopher who actually did his Ph.D. at Columbia around 1910, and brought these American ideas back to his work in China, to try to update Confucianism. So hopefully that article will survive the review process and find its way into print. We are very committed to it, but it is in fact a slow process. There are some impediments that are beyond our control, I would say.

Steve: I think many people are a little bit confused, or have a murky idea, of just what a board of editors of a scholarly journal does. You've described how they actually do write some content for the journal. Could you expand a little bit for us, and explain the purpose and the function of the board of editors?

Dr. Breckman: Right. Well, I think that there are a couple of different key functions, maybe even three. One would be that they do provide us with a pool of available readers. We've got people in a wide range of fields, and therefore we've got some expertise we can draw upon. I want to return to that point. A second thing that they can do for us is simply advise us. We have an editorial meeting each year, and of course the editors, the actual four editors, are at the center of activity. But we are very interested in what our editorial board has to tell us. A third thing would be drumming up business, tapping their networks, and very importantly really emphasizing to our editorial board that we want

them to have their ears open when they go to conferences. We want them to solicit things, we want them to charge up to the podium after a really great talk, and say, "We want your article." So those are the kinds of things the editorial board does for us. Now, circling back to that first point, which is that they can do a lot of the peer review reading for us. This is in fact shifting in our journal. It's an interesting effect of the internet, in fact, because it used to be that a journal like the *Journal of the History of Ideas* would have thirty editors, and in the course of a year any one of those editors might have to read six or eight submissions and evaluate them for publication. What we've found is that through the internet, we can search out the best experts in the world on a specific subject, and approach these people through the internet and send them a submission, have an electronic file, and so forth. This has really produced wonderful results, because for one thing, if you approach an expert in a specific field, and say we've got an article right in your field, there's a much greater chance that they're going to accept the invitation to actually read the thing, because it's in their interest. Secondly, we get excellent reports, really well informed reports. I've been an editorial board member, as well, and I do my best and everybody does their best. But the bottom line is, you often find yourself stretched way outside your real expertise. So we've found the internet has become a really useful tool for broadening our pool of available experts, and that has produced a little bit of a different dynamic with the editorial board.

Steve: Makes it more fluid?

Dr. Breckman: It makes it more fluid, the editorial board is utilized less. The bottom line is we utilize them less . . .

Steve: . . .for peer review. . .

Dr. Breckman: . . .for peer review. I mean, on the other side, we're trying to actually utilize them more, by inviting them to actually contribute to the journal. Most of our editors have at some point published in the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, but what we're looking for now are articles from our editors which wouldn't necessarily go out to peer review, but would be commissioned articles, big synthetic articles about the state of a field, that kind of thing. That then becomes a way of reactivating the editorial board even as our practices in terms of peer review seem to be shifting through the internet.

Steve: Here at the College of Saint Rose, our faculty have been recently engaged in quite a lot of discussion regarding the meaning and value of interdisciplinary study. From your perspective, what's the current state of interdisciplinary study in higher education?

Dr. Breckman: I think that interdisciplinarity is a very important value, you know, full stop. It's an important value. I think there is a danger that people get rooted in a specific discipline with its own practices and its own set of priorities and its own way of seeing the world. Of course we all have to be specialists, and I think we all need to, in some

ways, have an anchor in some specific field, and some specific set of practices. But I think our intellectual relevance diminishes the more anchored we are in our specific little academic world. So I think interdisciplinarity is a very important way of moving us out of that. One of the things I think is that interdisciplinarity is often defined selectively, depending on the academic and intellectual fashions of a certain time. For example, I would have to say as an intellectual historian long before I'd heard the word "interdiscipline", I was interdisciplinary. I did a Bachelor of Arts where I did a double honors in History and English, and I felt that was interdisciplinary. Likewise, historians of ideas have often one foot in philosophy, one foot in history or art history, or what have you. But I think when people talk specifically about interdisciplinary studies, and the need for this, often it is driven by some more specific agenda where there is, in some ways, one kind of interdisciplinary study that is actually in mind, and other forms of interdisciplinary work get kind of overshadowed, if you see what I mean.

Steve: Sure.

Dr. Breckman: So I think it's important to recognize we didn't invent this in the last ten years, just because we're talking about it, we didn't invent it. Secondly, if we really value and interdisciplinary work, we have to recognize that it can take a lot of different forms, and unpredictable forms.

Steve: Do you think knowledge become too vast for anyone to truly master several disciplines?

Dr. Breckman: Um, I think it has become too vast. In my own work, my first book is on Karl Marx and the intellectual context of early nineteenth century Prussia. I'm now working on contemporary French thought, so 1950's, 60's, 70's to the present. And even that move is considered a brave move. It's a difficult move, and that's even within the field of intellectual history. If you were really to try to, you know, let's say really be serious about sociological method and study and also intellectual history, or you know, pick two quite disperse fields. This is a serious challenge. What I feel is that the world of knowledge has simply become too big. It became too big already 200 years ago. A figure like Goethe, the great German poet, looks pretty polymathic, but even he lamented the feeling of impossibility that the world of knowledge had just gone beyond anybody's grasp. What I do feel though, is that we tend to be anchored firmly in some sort of intellectual landscape and set of practices or ways of viewing things, but that rather than that becoming in some ways a closed door, it can become an open window. I think we all need some kind of scaffolding or structure as we approach the world, as we approach complex bodies of knowledge. That scaffolding can be a flexible tool, or it could be a restriction, and I would like to believe it can be a flexible tool. I've found, for instance, intellectual history, and here I would very much agree with Arthur Lovejoy, I've found

intellectual history to be a good tool for my own effort to grasp a lot material, a lot of phenomena that in some way escape my true expertise.

Steve: I'd like to ask a question that may be about a closed door. Does the system of tenure and promotion inhibit scholars in disciplines other than history and philosophy from submitting papers to the *Journal of the History of Ideas*?

Dr. Breckman: Well, I think that there are problems with the fact that disciplines tend to assign value to specific journals. I think that within the social sciences and humanities, probably economics is the most extreme. Any economist will say, here's the list of the five best journals, and here's number one, right through five, and there's no question that number one is number one and number five is number five. If you want to submit a journal article, you start at number one and then you work your way down. In the humanities, this is just not the case. It would be very hard to say, in the historical field, Journal A is clearly the best and Journal C is ranked eighth. We just don't think that way. But nonetheless, for example, if you're an art historian seeking tenure, you want to publish in journals that will be clearly recognized by your senior colleagues as relevant journals in your field. So there is some restriction placed on people at that level.

Steve: As a result, do you get more papers from professors who are already tenured? Do you know?

Dr. Breckman: No, I would say we get--I think this is true of many of the journal editors I have talked with in the humanities would probably back this up--I would say the majority of our submissions actually come from younger scholars. I think it has to do with the fact that, if you are really far down the line, with a very rich publishing record, you generally don't publish through the peer review process. You can be kept busy just fulfilling invited solicitations. Yes, we do get submissions from senior people, and from very prominent people, but I think that in some ways, for instance even speaking for myself at this point, the large percentage of my publishing is actually not through peer review any longer, it's through invitations. Although, it's always important to kind of keep your foot in the door with peer review publishing, as well. I think there's a lot of incentive to keep doing it, even as you move into a later stage of career. But we get lots of submissions from assistant professors. We even get submissions from people who haven't gotten their Ph.D.'s yet, and we periodically do publish pieces from people who haven't finished the doctorate yet.

Steve: Well, that's encouraging.

Dr. Breckman: Yes.

Steve: In many disciplines, published papers are often written by multiple authors. I notice in your journal virtually all the articles are by a single author. Why is that?

Dr. Breckman: It is the nature of a discipline like intellectual history. It's pretty hard to divide the labor. It's pretty hard to delegate. I have a research assistant, and I don't know what to do with the person. Can I say to my undergraduate, could you please read this book by Hegel and report back to me? I mean, you know, I think as an intellectual historian, as a philosopher, as literary critic, you need to read these things, you need to let them gestate, you need to think synthetically, and associatively, and intuitively. It's pretty hard to do that by committee or by delegation. So I think that's really the reason.

Steve: Well, along those lines, it's slightly unusual to have 4 executive editors. How do you divvy up the work?

Dr. Breckman: Right. The first thing I can say is I am absolutely grateful that there are four of us. I do tip my hat to my predecessor, Donald Kelly, and for that matter the other editors in the past. In some ways the number four is kind of an accident. There was a certain dynamic that developed in terms of the discussion of taking over the journal. We find that it's a very effective thing. For one thing, we represent a range of fields. So my field is 19th and 20th Europe. Martin Burke, who teaches at the City University of New York is an Americanist, so he's an expert on American culture and intellectual life, really from the colonial days to the present. Ann Moyer, who is my colleague at Penn, is a Renaissance historian. Then Anthony Grafton at Princeton is Renaissance and Early Modern scholar, and it is a godsend to have a number of people with a range of special knowledge, such that we can really handle pretty much anything that comes in, at least on the European side. If things are coming in on Asia or Latin American, then we are grateful to have our editorial board members. We divvy up the work in a very congenial way. Every submission that comes in gets read by two of us. So at our monthly editorial meeting, we take all the new submissions and we divide them up according to, as much as possible, according to our interests.

Steve: This is a face-to-face meeting?

Dr. Breckman: Yes, this is a face-to-face meeting. Our office is in Philadelphia, so we have our meetings in Philadelphia, and Princeton is only about 60 miles from Philadelphia, and Martin Burke, who teaches in NY, actually lives in Philadelphia, so it's all very convenient. We divide up the papers so that every paper gets a reading by two of us. At the next meeting we compare notes and we decide if we want to proceed with an article or not. If we decide to proceed, then at that point it will go out to readers for the peer review process. About 70%, possibly even 80% of our submissions do not go out to readers. We actually have a pretty high bar right at the beginning. At that point we are very fortunate to have a superb managing editor, a full time managing editor, Robin Ladrach, who is really very, very competent, and is able then to, in a sense, steer the traffic from that point forward. Normally, if we read a submission, and we decide this is something that we want to proceed with, at our meeting we will have already made some

suggestions about possible readers. So at that point the managing editor and our graduate assistant can then manage the correspondence, solicit the peer reviewer and make sure that he or she gets the piece, and kind of track the article from that point forward. At the other end of the process, the division is fairly flexible, in the sense that eventually the reports will come in, and we need to read the reports and decide how to proceed. To a certain extent, that work simply depends on who happens to drop by the office on a given day. You know, we all try to be in the office once a week, so inevitably on the editor's desk there will be a couple of files with the reviews, the evaluations. Then there's a decision made or at least a conversation opens between the editors as to whether we should be accepting the article outright, or requesting revisions, or perhaps rejecting the article based on the evaluations.

Steve: I'd like to change gears a little bit now and ask about the journal being published online. The *Journal of the History of Ideas* is available online in both JSTOR and in Project MUSE.

Dr. Breckman: Yeah.

Steve: Can you explain for our listeners the benefits of making your journal available through those venues?

Dr. Breckman: First off, having journals available through those venues really increases the availability to readers. The downside of all of this is that an undergraduate can go through a whole degree with scarcely setting foot in a library, which is a bit of a concern. But on the other hand, people are able to gain access to articles very, very readily. It has in fact become a major revenue source. Essentially, what's happening to our journal, and I think it's common to many, many journals, the number of subscribers we have to our print edition is going down. This is at one level a kind of worrying tendency, but it's offset, at least at the financial level, by the fact that we're getting more and more subscribers to the electronic. I think a lot of libraries find it advantageous to have the electronic. You know, they don't have to worry about storage space, they don't have to play steward to an ever increasing bulk of paper copies.

Steve: And we can make it available at 3 a.m. without us having to be here.

Dr. Breckman: Exactly! You know, there are all sorts enormous issues which are unresolved in terms of, for example, archiving these things. One of my colleagues in the Penn library has been put in charge of a task force at the University of Pennsylvania, just trying to explore the available technologies in terms of how do you really archive these digital records, such that they can be continually updated as the technologies change, that there are stable platforms that are nonetheless infinitely malleable as technology changes. That's a problem for the technicians, it's not something I could even begin to contribute

to. But of course there are some longer range issues that have to be dealt with, even as we all are taking this full plunge into digitalization.

Steve: Yes, indeed. That is a big issue for librarians. It's a very common topic of conversations at our conferences and in other venues. Do you think the journal will be published in print into the foreseeable future, or do you think perhaps during your time of being editor it will become online only?

Dr. Breckman: Well, we speculated about that. I think that there will come a time when we do not produce a paper copy, but certainly not in the foreseeable future, in the sense that we're not talking concretely about this. But I think that no pun intended, but the writing is on the wall, or on the digital wall. I think journals will go increasingly to strictly online platforms. I think that insofar as anyone, say older than 30, grew up with books and paper and material objects, there is a lot of ambivalence about contemplating that scenario.

Steve: But the younger generation growing up reading things from the screen may not feel that way, right?

Dr. Breckman: That may be the case. They already in some ways don't have a primary identification with paper copy. At least often when I talk to students, there doesn't seem to be that same attachment to books, even if they like to read. I think that we older, slightly, I'm in my mid-40's, you know, I've been a kind of a maniac book collector since I was a kid, it means an enormous amount to me. I remember for instance when I published my first article, having that print copy, that kind of magical transformation of your words onto the page. There it is, this product, and you know somehow it has its own life, and so forth. It saddens me to think that that will not be the case at some point in the future. One other concern about this that I have is I worry that it will have some negative impact on the quality of journals. I know that there are some online journals, there are of course journals at this point that don't have a paper version, and I was talking to an editor of one of these, and he was saying, "We really don't do any copy editing." And I can see where, in some ways, the thing feels both more ephemeral and more changeable. But if you're producing a paper copy and this thing is going to go into the library and at the end of the year be bound into a hardback volume and so forth, you're kind of making this object for the ages.

Steve: Right.

Dr. Breckman: Right. There's a craft, and there's care, and there's a slightly artisanal dimension to it. We labor over the copy editing, and send queries back to the author. We want to produce a pristine object, and I do worry that with this move to digital, that everybody in a sense sees it as I say, it's ephemeral, and it's changeable. So if there's a

mistake, you could always correct the mistake. But nobody ever corrects the mistakes, so they just go off into digital heaven.

Steve: Well Dr. Breckman, these are all very interesting topics, and I could talk to you about them for a great deal longer, but our half hour is up.

Dr. Breckman: That was quick.

Steve: It was. It was very interesting, I enjoyed speaking with you.

Dr. Breckman: Well, it was a great pleasure.

Note: The audio file for this interview was edited for length, to fit our 30 minute time limit. This transcript includes passages edited from the audio.

16: *Geomorphology*

Interview with Dr. R.A. Marston, Kansas State University, October 2007

The subject of this installment of Periodical Radio is the scholarly journal *Geomorphology*. It is published by Elsevier in 10 volumes per year, with 4 issues per volume. *Geomorphology* began publication in 1987. The scope includes a broad range of geomorphic themes, including tectonics, glacial processes, volcanics, erosion and weathering, dunes and deserts, remote sensing methods, and hazards. *Geomorphology* is a journal included in Elsevier's Science Direct package of online scientific journals.

To learn more about *Geomorphology* and the experience of editing a scientific journal published by Elsevier and included in Science Direct, I've invited its editor, Dr. Richard A. Marston, University Distinguished Professor at Kansas State University, to be my guest.

Steve: Dr. Marston, welcome to Periodical Radio.

Dr. Marston: Thank you.

Steve: *Geomorphology* covers a broad range of topics. Could you summarize for our listeners the topic areas included in the journal?

Dr. Marston: Geomorphology is the study of landforms and the processes that create them, including the effects of humans on erosion rates and so on. So we welcome manuscripts that look at the full range of topics related to the study of landforms, including papers on theory as well as site-specific studies. These topics might cover things as wide-ranging as glacial landforms, landforms created by rivers, landslides, the weathering of rocks and soils, karst landscapes--sinkholes and that sort of thing, aeolian processes and landforms, coastal dunes, lakes, quantitative geomorphology, and now even more and more landforms on other planets. So it's pretty wide ranging, and we are more and more accepting a greater variety of articles, not just the traditional research articles, but also articles related to, let's say, review articles that review the literature on a given topic. We have a faster review process for articles that are more fast-breaking news. For instance, finding something on Mars, we can get that into our journal much more quickly.

Steve: One of the items in the scope of the journal when I was reading about it was "hazards". Could you explain what that would encompass in terms of geomorphology?

Dr. Marston: Yes, it's often said that if some catastrophic event like a landslide occurs, but no one sees it, is it a hazard? Well, when people get involved, either triggering catastrophic events or hazardous events, or they are affected by it, that falls within the range of geomorphology. That is to say, hazards that are related to earth surface

processes. So we might talk about shifting river channels, or extremely high erosion rates, maybe sometimes deposition of sediment in stream channels and how that increases flooding, the kind of problems we've seen down in New Orleans. And the loss of wetlands and how that can affect erosion by hurricanes along the coasts. Volcanoes, we've published articles on volcanic hazards, and dust storms, in terms of a hazard created by wind. So a lot of the processes that geomorphology looks at also become hazards whenever humans are in the vicinity. We just in fact last year published a special issue of the journal called "The Human Role in Changing Fluvial Systems." I was just checking today, and some of those articles rank in our top 25 most downloaded articles, which the publisher keeps track of.

Steve: Right. Well a fluvial process would be one. Can you explain other ways that humans affect geomorphology?

Dr. Marston: Oh, in so many different ways. Let's just talk about hill slope failures—landslides, mud flows, other types of failures. For instance, by removing the forest cover on a hill slope, some period of time later the roots, the tree roots will decay, and then you've lost the soil binding effect of the roots, and if a major earthquake or a huge rainstorm comes along, nothing is left to hold the soil in place, and you might have a mass movement, a large-scale slope failure. So that's one that is frequently comes up. But we also look at things like more slowly producing human effects, for instance through climate change on glacial processes. As glaciers retreat in mountain areas, they often create a lake in front of the glacier between the ice and the moraine that the glacier had created. As the glacier continues to retreat, these lakes can enlarge and sometimes break through the moraine, causing a catastrophic outburst flood downstream. As we see glaciers retreating in mountain areas around the world, this is becoming a bigger and bigger concern.

Steve: Global warming gets a lot of press nowadays. What else is happening with our planet that gets little or no press, but that deserves our attention? You mentioned the deforestation.

Dr. Marston: Yes.

Steve: Anything else?

Dr. Marston: Well, I would say just the overall rate that we're losing the soil, especially from agricultural activities. One of the members of our editorial board, David Montgomery, at the University of Washington, just wrote a book about this called *Dirt*. In it he documents very carefully the higher rate of soil loss from agricultural land compared to what would have occurred without agriculture in similar landscapes. The rate of erosion from agricultural land is many orders of magnitude higher worldwide when you compare it with uncultivated land. Of course we all need the products from

agricultural land, so you don't see an awful lot of attention given to this, even though the rates of soil loss from agricultural land are starting to move to very alarming rates, much faster than we can replenish the soil, either waiting for natural geologic processes to do it, or through fertilization and other subsidies. I would say that's another issue that deserves a lot of attention.

Steve: Globally, or just in the United States? Are there areas where that's a particularly critical problem?

Dr. Marston: You know, it's everywhere. I think that you can look at some of the areas in China and in Europe as having accelerated rates of erosion, especially China, I would say. But many of the marginal lands around the world are being farmed as there is increasing pressure for supplying food from local sources. Then this marginal land during a period extreme weather, either drought or a heavy rainfall, can be lost as agricultural land. Then the land is no longer able to produce crops at the same rate, and you've taken it out of the long term sustainability options. Also in mountain areas, as the population pressures increase in mountain areas you see terracing, which is generally a very good thing, actually increasing the stability of many hill slope areas. But if the population pressures become too great, the terracing might encroach on slopes that are just too steep, and subject to events like earthquakes or streams undercutting the toe of the slope, or very heavy rainfall, perhaps during a monsoon, and again the hill slopes can fail. So I don't think we can just point the finger in one place, but in a general sense it's the marginal places for producing agriculture where some of the human impacts are being strongly felt.

Steve: Has understanding of these human affects increased significantly since you first began researching geomorphology?

Dr. Marston: Yes, I'd say they have. Over the last 30 years, the number of scientific publications first of all has greatly exploded, and we have journals in several different countries that are international journals publishing articles related to landforms and geomorphology. You know, it's hard to really come up with an exact number of geomorphologists around the world, but it's many thousands, maybe not over ten thousand. But just the amount of information that's available through the scientific journals, certainly, but in other ways as well, is indicative of the growth of knowledge in this area. Translating knowledge into better policies for controlling soil erosion, that's where the greater challenge is right now.

Steve: That leads me to a question I had about who reads the journal. Obviously, professional researchers at research universities are a primary audience. Who else reads and benefits from the journal *Geomorphology*?

Dr. Marston: This is a good question, because the answer is quite different now than what I would have said even 5 years ago. Five years ago the journal only came out in printed form, and you had perhaps several hundred subscribers worldwide in terms of individuals and maybe a few thousand libraries. But now the journal is available electronically, and we're keeping statistics about this. The number of articles from our journal that are downloaded worldwide has increased from zero five years ago to 300,000 this last year. These come from all over the world, so the information is becoming more readily available, not just in the developed world, but in the lesser developed countries, where they may not be able to afford printed subscriptions, even in university libraries, but the publisher negotiates with each country what the rate of subscribing to their electronic delivery service will be.

Steve: That was one of my later questions, which I'll go ahead and address now. This online package is Elsevier's Science Direct package. My question was going to be, are you pleased with how the journal is presented and accessed in Science Direct? But I think you answered that question, if you went from zero in the print area, and maybe less than a thousand print subscriptions, was it?

Dr. Marston: Well, probably less than a thousand individual, personal subscriptions. The number of library subscriptions, I'm actually not sure, I'm guessing several thousand, something like that worldwide.

Steve: But Science Direct gives the journal much broader exposure.

Dr. Marston: That's right. You can have access to Science Direct without having a full subscription. It's controversial, I mean, the whole electronic delivery business is changing very quickly. It would be nice if it didn't cost anything, but publishers need to recover the costs somehow, so these rates are negotiated with probably each library. The net effect, though, has been an enormous increase in the ability of individuals and universities and other institutions to access the literature, which is ultimately what you want. What kind of an environment we'll be talking about five years from now, in terms of how articles will be delivered is hard to predict.

Steve: So you don't have a prediction of whether a print issue will still be produced in 5 years?

Dr. Marston: Well, I hope so. I'm old fashioned enough, I still like to have access the journals on my shelf, and pull them off and read them at leisure. I still have a hard time reading things online. But I have to admit that the younger scholars coming up, they're accustomed to doing that, and they don't look to purchase the print subscription as much as my generation does. I can't really predict what's going to happen there, but it sure seems to be going more to the electronic delivery.

Steve: What's your perspective, working as an editor, publishing through Elsevier. What services do they provide that support your job as an editor, and are you satisfied with those services?

Dr. Marston: Elsevier has been phasing in over the last five years their editorial system, and about three 3 years ago our journal quit using the traditional delivery of paper manuscripts and sending them out through the mail to reviewers. We do it all now electronically. I don't think I'd still be doing the job if it weren't for that. It's made it much more easy for the editor, and for the authors. Now a first time author has to muddle through the system no matter what publisher they're working with. In terms of getting the manuscript reviewers right away and being able to communicate with them in terms of returning the reviews to the authors, and in terms of me as an editor reviewing the articles, it all happens much more efficiently, quicker, and I think the end result has been much better. It also allows the author to keep track of where their manuscript is in the overall process. So I think more information is better, and the flow of manuscripts works much better with this electronic system that Elsevier uses.

Steve: Dr. Marston, I'd like to ask a few questions about how science works, and how the work of scientists is reflected in journals. Some observers of science criticize the editing and peer review process as being too insular, too resistant to fresh ideas. They might argue that an innovative idea ahead of its time, perhaps as an example Wegener's theory of plate tectonics back in 1915, could never be published in a journal with the prestige of *Geomorphology* today. Does that critique have any validity?

Dr. Marston: I think it's something that is always on an editor's mind. I think I hope for the arrival of a manuscript that has some breakthrough ideas, and not just another piece of work that could be described as normal science repeating the same test of ideas, but maybe just in a different setting. We're looking also for these big breakthrough articles, and I think there is a potential if you have negative reviews for something that is really a new and offbeat article, then a good idea might be brushed over. But, I would say that one way we've tried to address that problem is by having not only regular issues of the journal that my co-editors and I edit, but we have a number of special issues every year where guest editors are invited to organize a group of authors, usually it's in connection with a meeting. As I look at the titles from the special issues, many of them are broad topics looking at a theory or a new of way of looking at how landforms develop over time. One of these, though, just to give you an example, has been authored by Jonathan Phillips called "The Perfect Landscape". Professor Phillips is the professor of geography at the University of Kentucky, and he's using the movie *The Perfect Storm* as a metaphor here in describing a perfect landscape. We really have been lacking new theory over time, and he has kind of a new way of viewing how landforms, landscapes change over time. He says that "whereas the laws of physics and chemistry apply everywhere, each particular landscape has an inherited history of environmental change, and a particular

combination of geology, vegetation, erosional processes, weathering processes, so that the combination makes it very difficult to predict how landforms will develop over time.” This remains a major challenge when we look at long periods of time. Professor Phillips calls this the “perfect landscape,” and it explains a lot of the difficulties we’ve had as geomorphologists in predicting how these landscapes will change in shape, dimensions, and erodability into the future. That’s been a highly cited and highly regarded manuscript.

Steve: Do you ever receive submissions from independent scholars, from a writer who’s not affiliated with a research institution?

Dr. Marston: Yes, but pretty rarely. I mean, sometimes it’s a scholar who’s retired. That’s maybe not what you’re asking, but I would say, gee, out of the 300 or so manuscripts we receive every year, probably less than five come from an independent scholar. I’m not sure why that is, just there are very few out there who aren’t affiliated with government, or a consulting firm, or a university of some sort.

Steve: But they’re given the benefit of the same process as anyone else?

Dr. Marston: Yes, they are, and I once did some statistics on this just to make sure that we weren’t biased against any of the groups. The acceptance for manuscripts from university professors was slightly higher, but I felt comfortable in saying that there was no bias against accepting manuscripts from authors with either government, consulting firms, or the rare independent scholar.

Steve: Much has been written about the so-called citation impact factor, a measure of how often papers are cited in other papers. Some critics claim that that impact factor skews science in unhealthy ways, giving too much attention and money to some researchers while neglecting other areas. What’s your take on the value of the citation impact factor, and whether it’s misused?

Dr. Marston: There’s a lot of interest in the Science Citation impact factor. We track it every year; we compare it with our competing journals. But I know there are a lot of problems in it. For instance, I once heard about an article that was cited 80 times in a year, and then when, this wasn’t in our journal, but when it was investigated why this article was so frequently cited, it was because the author had done something wrong. There was a big error in the methods, so subsequent researchers were citing this article as the way not to investigate this particular geomorphic topic. So things like that can come into play, and I would say that as editors we hope the Science Citation number goes up, but I can’t say I’ve ever made a decision about accepting or not accepting a manuscript wondering, thinking that this would either increase or decrease our science citation factor. Because as I look at these articles that are most often cited, they are not the ones I probably would have predicted. So I’ve learned over time not to worry too much about

that factor, but I know the publishers are interested in it, although we've never received any instruction as editors to do something different to increase our impact factor.

Steve: Well that's good to hear. I'd like to backtrack a little bit back to the peer review process. How do you select reviewers? Can you explain for our listeners how that process works? How do you know who would be a good reviewer for a particular topic?

Dr. Marston: Yeah, that's of course a very key part of what any editor does. The way I do it, when I first receive a manuscript, I read it very quickly and look at the people that have been cited by the author. I look for names that occur repeatedly in the reference list. Then I also, from my own experience, think of people I know who are working in that same area, and make notes on that. Then in our Elsevier editorial system we have a reviewer database, so we can search through that. There are probably four or five thousand names in there. We can search by topic and location and get a list of names. I scroll through those and the history of what that person has done in the past in terms of whether they reviewed for the journal before, have they turned down requests every time, or how long do they take to review. I look at all of those factors and maybe pick from that list. Also, the authors are invited to suggest reviewers. Not all authors do that, but if they do I usually try to get at least one reviewer from their list. What we do in *Geomorphology* is we like to have one reviewer from our editorial board, and one outside reviewer, at least. Many times I get more than two, but usually ask for maybe five or six. Then, based on who returns the reviews, if there's some agreement, I might terminate the late reviews and go ahead and make a decision if I have two or three that are really solid.

Steve: What time line do you generally try to stick to for the peer review process, how many weeks?

Dr. Marston: Well, I looked up some statistics on this. The average number of days between when the first reviewer agreed to do the review and the date that the review was completed turns out to be over the last year, 36 days. The average number of days between the date the manuscript was first received and the decision on it is 72 days. Then I wanted to see how long it took authors to revise and resubmit their manuscripts. That turned out to be an average of 85 days, so even longer than the review time. Once an article is accepted, it will appear pretty quickly on Science Direct. But there's a backlog that's developed between the time the article is accepted and when it finally appears in print that's about 200 days.

Steve: Is that acceptable in your mind?

Dr. Marston: No, it's too long. You know, it's not as bad as some of the journals, but that's little solace. I think it should be quite a bit less. To Elsevier's credit, what they've done to respond to this is they've given the journal more pages every year to try to reduce the backlog. See, the trouble is that in the last three years the number of manuscripts

submitted has doubled, in large part probably because the electronic system makes it so much easier for people anywhere in the world to submit an article. Our acceptance rate hasn't changed, so that means with so many more manuscripts being accepted, the backlog has developed. We're probably going to have to start increasing our rejection rate a little bit, so that the backlog doesn't become a problem. But at least the articles are available as PDFs in a very short period of time, I think a very acceptable period of time, and available through Science Direct. That's the way most people get their articles, anyway, so that seems to be working out okay.

Steve: Dr. Marston, what do you find to be the personally most rewarding aspect of editing the journal?

Dr. Marston: I still get a nice adrenaline rush whenever I see the actual printed copy come in the mail, my own copy. I still like to look through the articles and find the ones that I edited. It makes me feel good to know that I helped those authors. Every once in a while, I can't say this happens a lot, but some authors will send an e-mail just expressing their appreciation. Sometimes the article was critical for somebody getting a raise or a promotion or tenure. Those are really nice to get. But I think it's when I go to professional meetings and people come up more informally and just introduce themselves, and say "You remember editing my article? I appreciated that, it came out nice in the journal." Just small things like that. You don't really expect it, it's just nice when it happens.

Steve: Dr. Marston, this has been a very nice interview. Believe it or not, our time is up.

Dr. Marston: Okay, Steve, it's been nice talking with you. I think, you know, the whole discipline of geomorphology is growing so fast, I see nothing but good things for not only our journal, but the other ones that deal with geomorphology, so if any of your listeners have any questions they're more than welcome to contact me.

Steve: Excellent. Thank you again.

Dr. Marston: Nice talking with you.

13: *portal: Libraries and the Academy*

Interview with Dr. Charles Lowry, Editor, November 2007

This installment of Periodical Radio is about the scholarly journal *portal: Libraries and the Academy*. *portal* is written by and for college and university librarians. Its peer-reviewed articles address library administration, information technology, and information policy. Each quarterly issue contains a guest editorial, five or six research articles, and approximately five book reviews. *Portal* is produced both in print and online through the Project MUSE database of full-text online journals.

Johns Hopkins University Press began publication of *portal* in 2001, when many members of the editorial board decided to leave the *Journal of Academic Librarianship* to launch a new journal. I'll let my guest tell that story. It was a successful launch. *Portal* was runner-up for the best new journal of 2001 award from the Council of Editors of Learned Journals, and it's now in its seventh year of publication.

My guest is Dr. Charles Lowry, a founding executive editor, and current editor of *portal*. He is Dean of Libraries at the University of Maryland College Park.

Steve: Charles, thank you very much for taking time in your busy schedule for Periodical Radio. First, can you describe for our audience the scope *portal's* coverage?

Dr. Lowry: Well *portal* was originally conceived as a journal that would deal with academic librarianship, but from a slightly different perspective than we have come to appreciate with some of the other key journals in this space, such as *JAL* [*Journal of Academic Librarianship*] or *C&RL* [*College & Research Libraries*]. That was that we wanted to try and think about the library in the larger context as an institutional element within higher education. So we wanted very much to emphasize two things. Number one, it would be an international journal, and gradually it's come more to be that. We also wanted to have a greater participation from outside of the library per se. That is to say, we welcomed research articles and thought pieces that engaged the faculty, as well, from the user perspective for academic libraries. We've accomplished that in some measure. I can't say that we have gone as far as we might have wished, but we've had a significant number of articles that have been reflective of the idea of bringing the user perspective, generally written by librarians and faculty members. We've also had members of the editorial board who are not librarians.

Steve: What topic areas are of most interest to your readers, in broad terms?

Dr. Lowry: Well that's rather a tough one. I think what we've tried to do with *portal* was not to pigeonhole ourselves, but to deal with some of the more leading edge issues. So what we find often is that *portal* articles revolve around not just questions of library

operations and how to manage those, but some of the leading edge areas such as assessment, policy decisions around information. I've heard some of my own library faculty refer to it as a journal that emphasizes things that are of direct interest to the administrative perspective. I think in some measure that's fair, but not about management and administration *per se* as so much as about the top level issues in academic libraries. We don't focus on the specific elements of librarianship quite so much, although you certainly will find articles here about instructing graduate students, conducting virtual reference, that sort of thing. But again, we try to keep the articles focused in a way that lets them speak to the larger academic library community, and to larger concerns.

Steve: There's an interesting story behind the creation of *portal*. Could you tell us the story of what happened at the *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, and of how *portal* came to be?

Dr. Lowry: Oh, my. Well, I've written about it a fair amount, including my first editorial when I moved to the direct management of the journal as editor after Gloriana St. Claire stepped down. So I'll repeat some of what I wrote there. I was at the time that *portal* was founded a member of the *Journal of Academic Librarianship*'s board. I was a feature editor and was responsible for the technology feature, and had been for some years. Dick Daugherty and Ann Daugherty were still the sole proprietors of *JAL*, asked me to do that. I was at Carnegie Mellon at the time. *JAL* was thereafter sold to a small publisher and it continued to be quite successful, and I continued with my contributions. Then they sold to Elsevier, and there was a natural, I think, concern on the part of the board. We brought it to the Elsevier management that we did not want to see our journal, and I say that as a considered thing, because there really was a strong sense of ownership in this board of the journal and it's historic importance to academic librarianship. We did not want to see this journal escalate rapidly in price, and we wanted some commitment from Elsevier about the pricing arrangements and what they would be like. Failing in getting any kind of expression of even interest in our concern, we decided that we would step down and create another journal that we felt was responsive to particular value concerns that we had. And we did that. We were, I thought at the time, and I still do today, very lucky that we easily found a willing publisher who was eager to go forward with establishing a new journal in a space that had been long occupied by several other titles, and that was the Hopkins Press. So we were lucky to have them and their support. I think that we were a fairly successful journal almost from the first issue. We were very quickly cited heavily and appeared in the ISI citation indexes and the use of *portal* has climbed dramatically over the years. It's one of the most heavily used journals in Project MUSE in spite of the fact that it's only now seven years old.

Steve: And that association with Johns Hopkins University Press was with what many people listening to this would know as Project MUSE, the online suite of journals.

Dr. Lowry: That's correct.

Steve: *Portal* has been a part of Project MUSE since the inception of portal.

Dr. Lowry: Since day one. It appeared in MUSE right away. But *portal* does have a print version, and always has. There are not that many print subscriptions to it, and most people I would argue who read portal, read portal in the MUSE electronic environment. But there's a hard copy of this journal, as well, which still gets some subscribers, particularly individual subscribers who don't have access to MUSE.

Steve: To a reader of journals who's not a librarian and is not paying the bills, it could appear that there's no significant difference between getting a journal through Elsevier's Science Direct or getting it through Johns Hopkin's Project MUSE. What do you think professors and students should know about the relative merits of Project MUSE and Science Direct?

Dr. Lowry: Well, I think that Science Direct is a very different kind of publisher. If I can use that word, MUSE isn't actually the publisher, MUSE contains many things that are just the Hopkins Press. Science Direct is a large commercial venture, whereas MUSE is a not-for-profit venture, and always has been. As a commercial venture, the cost per bit of information in Science Direct is extraordinarily higher than the similar costs to the subscribers that the profile that MUSE has. But I think that if price is any measure, the value for a MUSE journal is much higher, since one doesn't have to pay as much to get it. It creates a much greater opportunity. There is a long standing battle that I guess I have to say stretched over the entire 35 years of my career as a librarian and library manager, that relates to the acceleration in periodical prices, and I think it's a well known and well understood issue, if I may use that euphemism. I would argue that anything that we can do to create some price competition and price discipline by creating new journals is a good thing, because I think it's palpably ridiculous that any publisher of journals should have a 42% profit margin, that's just a tad excessive compared to almost any industry that I know of. But it is the way things are right now, and I think that a whole debate around Open Access has a great deal to do with this, and very little to do with the merit of any individual journal title. We're finding that scholarly information is increasingly being priced out of reach, and that the plain fact is that even members of the research library community, members of ARL [[Association of Research Libraries](#)] increasingly are faced with dilemmas about what to retain. We have reduced our journal subscriptions and our database subscriptions to electronic resources over the last 3 years every single year in spite of large infusions of new money into the acquisition budget, simply because inflation has so far outstripped the 3 or 4% rate of increase in acquisitions funding from my administration.

Steve: Here at Saint Rose I see an inflation rate from year to year very steadily in the 8-10% range.

Dr. Lowry: Yes, that's invariably the experience. I think that it has been the case that books haven't inflated so fast, until recent years. We're starting to see a similar spike there. One of the challenges, of course, is in some measure our journal costs and database costs are cannibalizing book budgets in order to keep up with those. The result is that the market for the scholarly monograph is in great danger, and the prices are going up because they're being drug along by database and journal prices, particularly in science, technology, and medicine.

Steve: There is Association of Research Library data, ARL data that supports that strongly, I've seen the graphs that show that.

Dr. Lowry: Unquestionably supports it. The empirical evidence is very, very strong. If you look at any number of studies, it's clear, too, that MUSE is just one example of a not-for-profit university press type publication that is a far greater bargain for the high quality that you get of the journals in that database.

Steve: I was going to ask you about SPARC [[Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition](#)], and part of what I was going to ask you've already explained, why their activities are important. But can you take a moment to explain what the SPARC organization is, and what their goals are?

Dr. Lowry: Well, SPARC is I guess what one would call a voluntary organization. It is subscribed to by libraries, some publishers are overt and direct supporters of it. SPARC's primary role has been to, number one, dramatize the challenges particularly of the journal market, and to create opportunities with partners to advance alternatives to the current market structure that we have. In some measure to get us back to the principle that most journal publishers started with, that the purpose of journal publication was to be sure that there was access to the content, not significant profit margins. That's putting it rather strongly, perhaps in some minds, but I think it really represents accurately what SPARC is about and what we hope SPARC will accomplish.

Steve: Does SPARC officially promote Open Access?

Dr. Lowry: I think SPARC is a very strong ally to Open Access, but one would hasten to add that the definition of Open Access is not a settled matter, and what we mean by Open Access is highly variable across disciplines. If I might take *portal* as an example, *portal* can be characterized in some measure as an Open Access journal, because we allow authors to post their publications. Only in the case of institutional repositories do we ask them to even give a nod towards requesting permission, which has always been given freely. The plain fact is that to get *portal*, you have to subscribe to it, either as an

individual subscribing to the hard copy, and/or to the MUSE database. So it's not Open Access in the same sense that PLoS [[Public Library of Science](#)] is. That is to say the funding stream for *portal* comes from author contributions, and that is put up on the web and anybody can get to it, whether or not they have contributed to it. I'd say though that are probably going to emerge a number of different models for Open Access, and *portal* is one. One of the important things to remember is that *portal* remains a bargain for the content. I would say that we want to encourage viable and robust journals that continue to be highly price competitive, and to represent a fair value for their content. The definition of Open Access in some minds is that everything is on the web and everything is for free, but I always hasten to add as an editor that I do have a fiduciary responsibility, and *portal* costs money. The Hopkins Press has to muster resources. Now, *portal* has been its first year of publication at least at break even, and now it shows an excess of income over cost. But that excess is not large, and it shouldn't surprise us that the press needs that kind of an excess in order to manage its whole journal portfolio.

Steve: Do you think some advocates of Open Access ignore, or at least undervalue the role of the publisher and the editor, and don't pay enough attention to the genuine costs involved in creating a high quality product?

Dr. Lowry: Well, I think there are voices there of people who are just, who tend to be-- How can I put this?--ideological about it, and don't really take that into account. But I think by and large most voices, at least in the library community that are supporters of Open Access understand that the viable journal costs money to produce. It's certainly the case that we know that you have got maybe two polar extremes here. Maybe there's the PLoS version where it is completely supported by the contributions of those people who are published within its pages.

Steve: We should take a moment to explain what PLoS is—it's the Public Library of Science.

Dr. Lowry: Public Library of Science, and it's first journal title was *PLoS Biology*, and the model--I think they, at the risk of misspeaking myself here--I think they had some Mellon money to begin, and are moving towards a fully self-funded model in which author page charges are what the publication survives on. That is to say, authors provide money when their articles are approved, and that money is what helps PLoS stay in business, and do its editorial work and support itself and continue to provide the technology. It's a completely online journal now, I don't know if they still produce a hard copy. But that's a model that works very well perhaps in the science area like biology, where virtually everybody who contributes has a research grant, and/or institutional subvention. Some would argue, well, that's the way we ought to do it for all journals. But I think that most of what is published in the world of academic research tends to come from the larger research institutions. What that says in effect is the larger research

institutions should fund the full advance, or the full exposition of their knowledge through journals and other means, and everybody else would get it for nothing. So you have the free rider issue. At the perhaps opposite extreme of Open Access would be a journal like *portal*, that really still continues to have a traditional journal profile, but allows it authors to exercise robustly their own copyrights. At the same time there's a risk in this model, because if everything in *portal*'s covers were immediately available, which I have to say it is not, on the web, the amount of activity in MUSE itself would decline. The budgeting model for MUSE is that journals are given, awarded I should say, income based on the amount of activity of the journal title itself. So the fact that *portal* is a journal that does better than break even is a function of the fact that people read it online in MUSE. If it were immediately and completely available elsewhere, my guess is we'd have a declining use of it in the MUSE environment, which means that even though there would be high use of it, it wouldn't be reflected in a way that produced a contribution that allowed for a balanced bottom line.

Steve: Is the revenue from MUSE sufficient to sustain the journal, or do you need the revenue from the print subscription to break even?

Dr. Lowry: The revenue from the print subscription is almost enough to pay for the print subscription. I think it sort of wavers around the line of break even. It has never been enough to support the entire activity of the journal. If it weren't for MUSE, the Hopkins Press would be experiencing a significant net loss on *portal*, at least the last time I looked at the figures, which was a year ago. So MUSE is essential. It's not surprising that MUSE is where we get most of our use. The plain fact is that we now all get aggravated when the article we want to see isn't immediately available online, because that has become the modality that we are familiar with, because of its convenience.

Steve: Do you think Hopkins Press will continue creating the print subscription for those who want to receive it that way?

Dr. Lowry: You know, I can't answer that question. We have made the case that we ought to just forget about it. My board would be okay with doing that, and we've suggested it to them. There's still the world of sales, in which having a sample copy has some impact, believe it or not. Putting it out on the table and having people look at it is a way of representing the fact that this is a journal entity. You may remember that when *PLoS Biology* first came out, they produced a hard copy of it.

Steve: I remember getting the sample issue.

Dr. Lowry: Yeah. Why did they do that? Well, they did it because that's the conceptual framework that we still operate in, in some significant measure about journals. Although, when old fuddies like myself are gone, I'm sure people will establish journals and never give second thought to the idea that they need a print artifact.

Steve: Charles, what do you enjoy most about editing *portal*?

Dr. Lowry: Oh, gee [laughs]. Well. I really have. . . this is the second time for me. I co-founded another journal with Don Riggs many years ago, an association journal called *Library Administration and Management*. I just have had a long-term personal commitment to the notion of advancing the field through research and expression of best practices, because we are a practice discipline, if you want to call librarianship that. It's essential to emphasize the exposition of the knowledge that is being developed about and around what a library is, what librarians do, and what an academic library is as an institution. So I think it's absolutely critical for the success of academic librarianship and for academic libraries to have a strong literature. Not just as a library manager, but as a library school faculty member who's taught for many years, it's just for me, remained a core interest of my own. I guess the most, the biggest kick I get out of it is that I've worked in and played something of central role in the creation of an important journal that expresses our profession, and expresses the role of academic libraries as institutions within higher education. Well, it's also kind of fun, I have to say to recruit articles. Invariably for me, when I'm listening to somebody give a speech, even if it's not fully baked, I think, "Gee, does this have a core?" Is this something important that ought to be heard beyond this little event today, with this individual standing up in front of an audience, and is *portal* a place that would serve for that purpose. I do a lot of the recruiting for journal articles that we've had. I've done this simply because of valuing the opportunity to spread good thinking, I guess is the best way to describe it. One of the things *portal* has done is really emphasize mentoring. We have become something of a place where we get a lot of neophytes, beginners who are submitting articles because they know we welcome that. I have to attribute the notion that we should have this kind of a profile to Gloriana St. Claire, who with Sue Barton and I founded the journal. She thought we really needed to do this, instead of just simply throwing a journal article away because it wasn't good enough for publishing now, wasn't really fair if it had potential, and there was some way to help the author develop it. So we've emphasized that role. I think that's been kind of a unique niche that *portal* has filled. Those are the principal things that drive me, and I guess in some measure as an editor you've got a bully pulpit. While I do recruit articles and editorial features from my board and others as guest editorials, I do get a chance to spout off every once in a while and say what I think in a very public way that's memorialized. That's kind of an enviable position to be in.

Steve: It sure is, and Charles Lowry this has been another venue for doing that, but believe it or not our time is expired. So thank you very much for being my guest on Periodical Radio.

Dr. Lowry: Great talking to you, Steve.

18: *American Journal of Bioethics*

Interview with Dr. Glenn McGee, Editor-in-Chief, December 2007

Our periodical for this installment of Periodical Radio is the *American Journal of Bioethics*, a scholarly journal that publishes serious discussion of the social implications of biomedicine. Quoting from bioethics.net, the companion web site to the journal,

“Every issue of the *American Journal of Bioethics* contains peer-reviewed Target Articles that zero in on tough questions, answered by Open Commentary articles from scholars across disciplines and cultures.”

My guest is Dr. Glenn McGee, Editor-in-Chief of the *American Journal of Bioethics*. An internationally recognized expert on bioethics, Dr. McGee holds the John A. Balint Endowed Chair in Medical Ethics at the Albany Medical College in Albany, New York. Dr. McGee has published several books and numerous articles, serves on several boards of directors and ethics advisory boards, and has received awards for his scholarship, teaching, and service. I am honored to have Dr. McGee as my guest.

Steve: Dr. McGee, welcome to Periodical Radio.

Dr. McGee: Thank you.

Steve: The *American Journal of Bioethics* began publication relatively recently, in 2001. What need does the journal fill?

Dr. McGee: Well, it's true, it is relatively recent, although I'm 40, so I like thinking of this as a quarter of my life, or something like that, now. We are in volume 10, so for all intents and purposes we've been working the equivalent of ten years, and it feels like much, much more than that. We came into existence a long time ago, because Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Press company, somewhat independent of MIT, contacted me through an American philosopher that I had trained with years and years ago. They said, “Hey, we do all this mind stuff and that sort of thing, why aren't we doing bioethics? And I said that's an interesting question. I did a little PowerPoint for them, and showed them what was going on in the world of bioethics. And I said three things. First, books in bioethics, which at the time were still a big deal—people read books back then. Even medical people did. I said books in bioethics are targeted at a tiny audience at a time when Dolly the sheep has been born. That's stupid. Why aren't scholars writing to a more general audience? In part that's has to do with the kind of editing that people do. So the dissemination of really thoughtful scholarship has got to be rethought. Second, I said, it's interesting and odd that with the number of journals in the field, and a field that's only thirty years old, that most people will say that a field like communication or sociology makes the turn inward. Nursing is the best example of this.

Very quickly they begin writing to each other, so that they can legitimate their Ph.D. programs, so that everybody speaks a common language, etc.-For thirty years now, bioethics journals have been written by people who work in this field, for people who work in this field. In physics that's easy to explain. In bioethics, people have claimed for thirty years that they were writing to a general audience. That is, if Senator Kennedy were interested in the future of medicine, that'd he'd pick up a copy of the *Hastings Center Report* or the *Cambridge Quarterly in Bioethics*, to just name a couple of the journals really are standouts in the field. And they'd read them and do something. The truth is that never happened. When we initially made our proposal, we said this--when people in the world of bioethics are rising, today--and this is back in 1997 when we had our first conversations--today they go before deans and promotions committees and they say to those people, "Here's my work." The journals that were published at the time looked like newsletters, and still do, mostly. They don't look like medical journals, they don't look like science journals. The review process is two years long, much more akin to the philosophy or classics journal that many of us are associated with. So assistant professors were literally being denied tenure, not on rate of publication, but on a combination of the fact that they're weird, I mean they don't get NIH grants, etc., and that their journals are unheard of. My claim was as important as it is to reach the general audience, it's important to reach the scientific and medical audience. I said I think that's possible. So I said I don't necessarily want to do it, but a way we could try to do that is to build a kind of system that would allow physicians, scientists, and lawyers and others to participate in not just peer reviewed article submission, but also in discussions of those articles and that the journals built around, and we're not the first journal to do this, but journals that are built around that are going to turn out, I said, and I think I was pretty prescient in this regard, are going to turn out to be the journals that are most important. I mean, if you look at the Thomson ISI impact factor ratings today, among the journals that nobody would ever have guessed would be most influential or most cited are journals like *Nature Reviews: Genetics*. Nobody would have ever said, "Yeah, I want my faculty to publish in a reviews journal." And yet the fact that our journal really does have a kind of comprehensive, multi-disciplinary approach with people talking to each other, and that it looks like a medical journal, and has a title that invokes the notion that we are being responsible to scientists and doctors. That was important. I don't know why it's been as successful as it's been. I'd like to think that it's because it's so cited, and where we're cited. Part of it probably has to do though with the fact that we have had just extraordinary luck with getting people who don't like to write for anybody but *New England Journal of Medicine*, to write for *AJOB*, and to give us some of their best stuff. With a jump start like that you can really move ahead quite quickly.

Steve: Dr. McGee, given your expertise in ethics, I'd like to focus much of our interview on ethical issues surrounding journal publishing.

Dr. McGee: Sure.

Steve: To begin, could you sketch for our listeners some of the important ethical issues surrounding scientific publishing?

Dr. McGee: Well I wrote a piece in *Science*'s online subsection called "Science Next Wave" called "Does it Take a Village to Write an Article?" From the time that I started teaching, I spent my first 10 years of my career at the University of Pennsylvania. As anybody in the world of medicine knows, there's a mandatory course for biomedical scientists in ethics. I call it the "pizza and blackberry" course. It takes about four hours, usually. The students read the newspaper and they're told a kind of mantra, do not steal data, do not pretend that you're an author or let anyone else pretend that they're an author with your own knowledge, do not in any way fabricate data. So don't be Hwang Woo-suk and say you've cloned something, or paint mice as Summerlin famously did. But I wrote a piece before the authorship piece, actually, in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, saying this is ridiculous. We've got articles by National Institutes of Health and other places on being a scientist that are designed to fix that, but my quote that gets requoted all the time is, if someone comes to your ethics program out of their basic science lab and already believe that it would be okay to paint a mouse black, you're not going to convince them otherwise in four hours with pizza. I think that fact has led to a broader conversation. With every new small ethics scandal comes increased attention to a broader problem that crosses medical journals. When you have editors-in-chief of *New England Journal of Medicine* and *JAMA* both resign, or are fired, right? When you have one them, Catherine DeAngelis, become an ethicist and go on a mission to crunch conflict of interest in journal publishing, then it's time to focus on those issues. The one that I focused on first was authorship. I think it's become clear that in the world of medical publishing it is almost impossible to know who's an author. I mean, we just don't know. I was trained as a philosopher. Very few articles in philosophy were co-authored until roughly 1985, and after that the co-authorship that exists exists for some very specific purpose. The people who are participating would never think, in general, of a junior or senior partnership. If they do, they would label it, and they'd write another paragraph about how much of a role one person played versus another. In a typical science piece by a big lab, the person who gets the money that makes the lab go will be what's called senior author, or last author. Some people know what that means. For example, when I first arrived at Albany Medical College, I talked about how my plan was as a person who was moving into a department chair position for the first time, to move from first author, where I'd been on the first hundred publications I'd had or so, to last author, because that's a good place to be, anchoring things, helping to set the compass, but not playing the primary role in writing the article. He said to me, why would it be better to be last? In some world that's not recognized. They just don't get it. In the world of biomedical science, if you don't have five or ten publications as last author, then that means you're

not senior. By the same token, first author is how you build your career, second author can be just as important. Everybody else doesn't count. And yet maybe they do. I was just on a paper in circulation about ethical issues in cardiac care, and where genetic testing is going in medicine. I was the ethicist of the group, and I was an important part of the group. I think I'm seventeenth author out of twenty-something. I don't even know what that means, right? I mean, I reviewed a couple of paragraphs and worked on it. The questions that have been asked--and that I asked in "Does it Take a Village?"--are do you have to write, number one, as Mildred Cho asserted in a pretty prominent article in *Science*—authors write. Do you have to contribute if you didn't write, in a special way? And what would that mean? In other words, does raising funding for a lab independent of anything else count? If you begin to kind of run through the list of things that count about authorship, a lot of them have less to do with who gets credit, than with who gets blame. So in the Korean stem cell scandal, when the University of Pittsburgh scientist who had essentially facilitated the publication of the most important paper, which was also the most fraudulent paper, about the purported cloning of human embryos, he wrote the editor of *Science* and said, "I want to be pulled off this paper." He was senior author. I was involved in conversations with them. Ultimately I was second author on a three author paper in *Science* called "Ethical Lessons of the Korean Stem Cell Scandal" in which we said, among other things, what *Science* said, which is, you can't pull a senior author. You're responsible for the paper. Scandals also have a lot to do with this, and that's important because if you're a student or a junior faculty member, today publication is how you get grants, if you're working in that world. Even if you're not, increasingly publication through teams is incredibly important. I can tell you from my own experience as an author that it is incredibly difficult to know where you stand with other authors, that the different disciplines such incredibly different standards for what it means to have collaborated, or for everyone to agree. For example, in biomedical sciences, everybody on the team might sign on to a paper, but author number four might disagree completely with its conclusions, and that would not be viewed as inappropriate or wrong, even though many of the new signoff sheets for these journals have a paragraph in them that say something like "I hereby agree that I am a part of this, and agree with what the paper says." Not the conclusions, necessarily, but this is not stuff that I disagree with. It is still not viewed as odd at all for one, two, three, four of those people to just agree with the work they did on the paper. In a law review article that I myself recently participated in, it was viewed as, and this is standard issue for a law review, no one ever writes a multiple author paper. It was viewed as unthinkable that a couple of the authors on the paper disagreed with the conclusions of the paper, and ultimately they pulled off. So here I am, a journal editor, and I myself had found myself in what I think of as the swamp of authorship today. We ourselves had to pull one of the papers about the Korean scandal because we ultimately said in our retraction article in the *American Journal of Bioethics*, we said the group that had promised that there was an ethics code that was followed in

Korea, this is one of the most important papers we published. It was hugely prestigious, quoted in AP stories, appeared in every newspaper in the English speaking world that carries the AP. We had to retract this paper because we could not vouch for the fact that those people had actually any clue what had or hadn't gone on in the laboratory. Thinking about that led us to have to write a paper about what we called "gee whiz" or "I was there" papers, a category that didn't even exist a year ago. And that category means the kind of quick, bang it out, 600 word article for *Nature* or *AJOB* or whatever, where you say, "we don't really know yet, but this is what we think we saw."

Steve: Glenn, in volume 2 of *AJOB*, you and Kelly Carroll, the managing editor, co-authored a conflict of interest policy for the *American Journal of Bioethics*. Could you describe what the policy is, and why it was necessary?

Dr. McGee: We crafted the policy because no one else in bioethics had one. We thought it was important, as we said, that there be policies about this, because we have encountered situations in which the nondisclosure of a conflict of interest in submissions had been surfaced ranging from peer reviewers saying, "By the way, I work with this person" and or authors calling furious, and saying why didn't find out that this person is really my department chair, even though the name of the department differed. More importantly, conflicts of interest in bioethics became a big deal after scandals about so-called ethics advisory boards, and I'll admit that I started this problem. I resigned quite publicly from Advanced Cell Technologies, the largest stem cell corporation in the world. I resigned as chair of their ethics advisory board after the ethics advisory board was not told that the company was experimenting with making clones of zoo animals. Essentially I said in my resignation letter, which was printed in the *Washington Post* in large part, and then on the front page of the *New York Times* in large part, I said this is, you know, the danger here is that ethics advisory boards in the world of stem cells, we as ethicists are beginning to play a role where we're rubber stamps. That's dangerous. Another bioethicist at the University of Minnesota said it in a more clever way. He said, "Bioethicists have gone from being guard dogs to being lap dogs." I think he was right in saying that's a real risk. That pointed to something that right wingers, as bioethics has become more and more political, and more and more of those who are Republican have said bioethics is mostly peopled by liberals. A number of those, for example the White House Domestic Policy Council actually started to say things like, "You guys are owned, you're bought and sold." At the same time, and this is really critical fact about bioethics scholarship—in the old days, when I was doing my post doctorate, there was what my boss Art Kaplan called the full employment act. If you wanted to study bioethics, there was so much money you had to beat it away because of the Human Genome Project, which gave five percent to ethics. In the world of stem cells, well, there's no money. All the money is for venture capital, except in California. So if you wanted to study ethical issues in human embryonic stem cell research, you basically had one and only one

choice, and that was to go work with one of the groups, because the stuff's all under patent, it's all totally secret. The biggest company, Advanced Cell, is not traded publicly, or wasn't until very, very recently, if they are now. So there was this problem of conflict of interest that we felt like we had to deal with. So we created a policy, and we decided that as long as we were going to be first, we would try to go beyond the existing policies. We'd adhere to the other ones, but we would go beyond. And we went beyond in the following way. We said we will disclose everything about what we earn. So I'm invited to give talks and particularly was then during the Dolly era for drug companies. So I'll disclose every dollar that I get from doing anything for anybody. We'll essentially release our tax returns. My co-editors and those who work with me in the editorial group agreed to it, I won't say reluctantly because I don't really remember. But then we created this policy and nobody cared. I have to say that policy was received with a resounding nothingness. Until finally Carl Elliot, whom I mentioned earlier, wrote a piece I believe in the *Atlantic Monthly*, but I wouldn't swear by it, it might have been *New Republic*, in which he hammered bioethicists. He's written five or six times the same piece over and over again. In this piece he really focused on *AJOB*, and he said I want this thing, and I've been asking for this conflict of interest thing forever, and I'm not getting it. It proved, if nothing else, that there's at least one guy out there who'd like to see a conflict of interest policy in bioethics not only be good, but lead the way.

Steve: I was particularly struck by the requirement that peer reviewers had to disclose the sources of research funding, and any other relationships relevant to the article that they're reviewing. Has that requirement made it difficult to recruit reviewers?

Dr. McGee: No, not at all. The only thing that makes it hard to get peer reviewers is that nobody wants to be a peer reviewer.

Steve: So you don't think it's changed that.

Dr. McGee: No, I don't. I think that actually first of all there's almost no corporate money in bioethics. I give talks occasionally for pharmaceutical companies, and I'm happy to be able to do that when it happens. But the list of, I mean Carl Elliot's complaints about corporate money going into bioethics, you can really only name two or three bioethics programs out of the four thousand that exist that receive any corporate money of any consequence. The list of people who have received more than \$100 from anybody, from any group at all, that has any investment in anything, is probably less than a hundred. It's not a big problem. Conflict of interest for peer reviewers occurs in, I mean that's the sort of policy we hoped would spread to avoid things like peer review of an article about Vioxx in *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Steve: But it hasn't caught on in medical journals.

Dr. McGee: I don't think so, but when I talk for example to the people who are working with Catherine DeAngelis, or to my peers in various committees that I serve on, it wasn't that people weren't interested, it's that they really do fear that that won't work out. We published probably most controversial article ever—no, that's not true, we've published a lot of crazy controversial articles. But the one that was most controversial within our field was an article by James Coyne that was about, essentially it was an argument that a particular psychiatrist working in Canada is bought and sold. That article, which dealt with conflict of interest, created what I would describe as the biggest flap in the history of bioethics. The argument that was made was, and this is really why we started this conflict of interest policy, as a thing that we thought was unavoidable, as opposed to what I'd argued before, which is we wanted to do it anyway. We had to do it quick in my view, because we were watching as other journals were having problems when they published papers by non-bioethicists. *Hastings Center Report* fairly famously published a paper by the psychiatrist who I'm talking about, in which that psychiatrist said that antidepressants cause suicide, and it's a huge problem, and accused Lilly in particular of hiding data about that. He said that in a bioethics journal. He subsequently said that in *American Journal of Bioethics*, and when James Coyne wrote his article, which even though we published it, it's a broadside attack on us, the *American Journal of Bioethics*. What he pointed out is, that this story about how *American Journal of Bioethics* and *Hastings Center Report* published these pieces by a psychiatrist, that psychiatrist went on to testify in a number of cases about suicides by children in which he cited as scientific data his publications in the ethics journals. Literally. Coyne's right, that in fact happened. So is it a conflict of interest? Yes. But it's bigger than that. It's that we're not equipped by peer review to do certain kinds of things. At least everybody I know in the publication world remembers the debacle, I'm blanking on the name of the guy, who published the postmodern physics article.

Steve: Andrew [correction: Alan] Sokol?

Dr. McGee: Yes, the Sokol affair. It stands out, but ultimately it was just a way in which people could argue about whether postmodern scholarship was real, whether or not it would be irresponsible to submit a fake article to a journal. In this case, for someone to publish purported scientific data in an ethics journal, and then it survives our peer review process, in our case it was a peer commentary. That's a huge deal. I mean, these were testimony issues for life and death issues. The biggest problem was that the argument that the *Hastings Center Report* made was that as soon as the article that this psychiatrist published came out in the *Hastings Center Report* that Lilly, who had been a big sponsor of the Hastings Center, pulled its annual contribution to the Hastings Center. The Hastings Center bragged and bragged and bragged for years about how they weren't influenced by companies, even though they had tons of money from companies, and I

believe still do. Look, they took that standing up, they lost the thirty thousand dollars, that was too bad, but that's just how it had to go.

Steve: Glenn, we have only five minutes left, so I wanted to ask you one last question that's on a different topic. What's your take on Open Access publishing, where the costs of running a journal are paid up front by an author pays model or grants or some other method, and then they're made freely available to anyone with a web connection.

Dr. McGee: I think it's unethical. It's unethical in the guise of being ethical, which makes it worse. I think the idea, of course, of providing scholarship free of charge is one that the world of the internet is more than prepared to provide. I think that the day is going to come in the not too distant future when the publishing world will be split into scholarly journals and not-so-scholarly journals. Scholarly journal editors who still own their journals will be able to say look, this is just not right. Already we push for example our company [Taylor & Francis], and they agreed, to give access to any library in the developing world. But to put the burden of peer review etc. on a potential author, this is disproportionate. It's unfair taxation. I mean, essentially it's the taxing of the poor, because it's assistant professors who are going to turn to those journals, and when those assistant professors do turn to the journals and fork over a huge amount of money, not only are they forking over that money for journals that don't have high impact factors, but the appearance in almost every discipline, that those aren't real publications isn't something that those journals are disclosing. So I really do honestly, I think that it's really insipid that although I don't think anybody intended for it to be this way, but I think it's insipid that the argument is being made, "Hey we're making things free, isn't that great, the libraries don't have to pay." Well these universities that are funded by grants from Duke, and Stanford, and Vanderbilt, and huge corporate grants and so on, who are cutting their library budgets. Those are the people who actually aren't paying for the journal subscriptions. So saving money for them by charging their faculty seems a little bit strange.

Steve: So you would be against the little bit of legislation in a large bill that's kind of in the works right now, the requirement would be that anybody that publishes something with NIH funding would then have to deposit their article on the web within a year.

Dr. McGee: Well that's a different issue. Of course, I think there's absolutely no question that authors should have a choice, but that's a different issue. The issue as to whether or not people who work in government institutions even under the Bayh-Dole Act [University and Small Business Patent Procedures Act] should be providing their information because it's federally funded for free is a very different question than whether or not Open Access journals should charge assistant professors a thousand dollars to submit an article. I think those are just completely different issues. If what it means is just that as physicists do, they'll just stick that stuff on the web, on a NIH web

site, who's to object? I think ultimately the biggest issue is going to be, so I'm a journal editor in bioethics, and if someone at the NIH has to put their stuff on the NIH web site, at the end of the day what's going to happen to them when they have to leave the NIH and want to go get a real job working in bioethics at a university, what's going to happen to them? Their journal articles have no impact factor whatsoever. I think that's going to hurt them and I think we should be very careful about moving in that direction.

Steve: Dr. McGee, I could speak to you for much longer, but unfortunately our half hour is up.

Dr. McGee: Well, I appreciate very much your calling, and I think this is a fabulous idea, and I'm happy to help you.

Steve: You have been very helpful, thank you. To subscribe to the *American Journal of Bioethics*, or to read Dr. McGee's blog, go online to <http://bioethics.net>. Thank you for listening to this installment of Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

Note: The audio file for this interview was edited for length, to fit our 30 minute time limit. This transcript includes brief passages edited from the audio.

19: *WoodenBoat*

Interview with Carl Cramer, Publisher, December 2007

This installment of Periodical Radio is about the popular magazine *WoodenBoat*: *The magazine for wooden boat owners, builders, and designers*. The story of this magazine's beginning is worth quoting from their web page:

"Jon Wilson founded *WoodenBoat* in September 1974 . . . Jon assembled the magazine from his (non-log) cabin in North Brooksville, Maine. All was accomplished without electricity or plumbing, and with his telephone nailed to a tree half a mile down the road. Taking issue #1 to the Newport Sailboat Show, he sold 400 individual copies and signed up 200 subscribers. Targeted to boatbuilders, designers, and wooden boat owners, *WoodenBoat* is published six times each year, and now has a circulation of approximately 100,000."

To learn more about *WoodenBoat*, my guest is Publisher Carl Cramer.

Steve: Carl, welcome to Periodical Radio. In my introduction, I quoted the story from your web site about how Jon Wilson started *WoodenBoat*. Could you flesh out the story a little bit for us, and describe how the magazine launched what is now an extensive enterprise of publications, shows, and schools?

Carl: Sure, Steve. Thanks for having me on today. Jon was a wooden boat builder who felt there was a need for a resource to communicate the experience of skilled boat builders before they passed along, and not just before they passed along, to broaden that communication and experience. So he started the magazine in the typical kitchen table experience. I've seen the photographs, so I know it's the case. He had a phone on a tree on the end of his driveway, which I think was about a quarter mile long. Low and behold, right from the beginning it was a huge success, and continues to be today.

Steve: Carl, how did you get involved?

Carl: Well, I actually subscribed to the magazine from the very beginning. Every year I'd apply for a job, in more and more desperate terms. Hopefully Jon never saved all my resumes, because I think I took some liberties. But after only 15 years I got hired, and I've been here now for 20 years.

Steve: So you started as an editor?

Carl: No, I actually started in the ad department. Prior to being here I had worked in magazine publishing in other parts of Maine. It was just a great opportunity. I had friends who worked here, and I lived about an hour and a half away. Wooden boats in particular

have always been one of my passions since I was a kid. So now I'm very fortunate to have vocation and avocation working together.

Steve: Wonderful. What do you enjoy most about being the publisher of *WoodenBoat*?

Carl: I think the people I work with, our readers, our advertisers, and the boats themselves. Every wooden boat has a story, and to have the wonderful ability to hear those stories, to see these incredible boats wherever they are, it's so invigorating.

Steve: What's the special allure of building a boat of wood, as opposed to fiberglass, or steel, or whatever?

Carl: Well I can think of several right off the top of my head. It's pretty easy to work with wood. I wouldn't even know how to build a boat in fiberglass, and aluminum is no easier. Wood's a nice material to work with, it takes shapes very well, and perhaps most importantly there are so many designs available, both historical and modern, that you can select from. You don't have to start from scratch in that regard.

Steve: Could you describe for us the division of labor between a publisher and an editor? I suspect most of my listeners wouldn't have a clear idea of who would do what.

Carl: Oh, editors have the greatest jobs in the world, they don't do anything.

Steve: [laughs]

Carl: I'm only kidding. The publisher is a different concept depending on where you are. If you work for a Madison Avenue publishing house, the publisher is really a high powered ad sales person. Unlike at *WoodenBoat*, because what I do is I'm in charge of the different departments that go into producing the magazine, whether that be editorial, circulation, which takes care of our subscribers and our news stand buyers, the art department that's responsible for the design and production of the magazine, or the advertising department.

Steve: I see. One of the things that struck me about *WoodenBoat* is that advertising is essential for all magazines to survive, but for *WoodenBoat* the advertisements are really an essential component of the information your readers get from the magazine. Would you agree with that?

Carl: I absolutely agree. In every survey we've done, the vast, vast majority, I want to say 97%, of our readers find that the advertising is critical for them to find products or to learn about new processes or modern technologies such as how to sheath, or a new paint that might be out on the market. So yeah, it's deemed critical for all of them. That's a wonderful combination. In too many other magazines, either the advertising is perceived as a hindrance to the reading experience, or just as a way of racking up profits.

Steve: Do you have strict rules about what sort of advertisements you'll accept, or does it just naturally work out that the ads fit your audience?

Carl: Typically the ads fit the audience. We've had to interject or deny a few over the years, but it's pretty easy for our market. Everybody's trying to sell their products or services, and they know if it works or if it doesn't work. We have a lot of advertisers who have been with us for a very long time, and it's just a great relationship.

Steve: Within the *WoodenBoat* enterprise, how do you balance and decide the roles between what purpose the magazine serves, and what purpose your web site serves? How do they relate to one another?

Carl: I think we're probably like many, although we're a little behind. We've had the web site since very early on in the internet. In fact I used to have an electronic bulletin board on a spare desk in my office, and it would make a pinging noise any time anybody logged on, and that was great. We're going to be doing some things for the web site that will be more tangible as electronic supplements, really, or enhancements to the magazine itself. If you go to the web site and can see in addition to some digital magazines and search items for past issues and articles, there's also a very active community of people on the *WoodenBoat* forum, which is a great resource for somebody who . . . Let's say, I was reading one today. A woman thought there were termites in a boat she was working on. It was just a very spirited exchange from readers or members around the world offering their advice. To me, that's such a great tool. Now they don't need us at the magazine identifying the bugs for them, but many other people, particularly in southern climes had had experience similar to what this person did.

Steve: Do you have a sense of whether the web site boosts circulation, or has a neutral effect, or hurts the circulation? Do people go to the web site instead of subscribing?

Carl: No, I don't think they do, because currently all our issues aren't there. I think it definitely enhances it. From tracking, we're able to view some, not a huge number, I'd say a reasonable level of new readers have come in through the web site.

Steve: I'd like to ask about your subscriber profile. First, what's the mix between subscriptions and newsstand sales for *WoodenBoat*?

Carl: Oh, we're about 52,000 subscribers, and about 45,000 newsstand buyers.

Steve: That's a very significant proportion for newsstand.

Carl: Oh yeah, it is. I wish I could understand it a little better. I think some people like the convenience of shopping at the local newsstand. But in the boating magazine field, we're far and away the market leader in terms of copies sold per month or per issue.

Steve: Do you have many subscribers outside of the United States?

Carl: Yeah, I think about 20% of our subscribers are out of the U.S. We have strong support from Canada, from Europe, particularly Western Europe, and I don't think to much surprise Australia and New Zealand, as well.

Steve: What portion of your readers are men? Do you know?

Carl: Ninety-seven percent.

Steve: Ninety-seven percent?

Carl: Yep.

Steve: I noticed though that quite a few members of your staff are women. Did you intentionally seek out female staff members?

Carl: Intentionally? No, no, no. Our staff's interesting. We're in a small town on the coast of Maine, a long way from anywhere. The population is about 800 in this town of Brooklin. So many of our staff come from the local communities, and that's great. Not necessarily women, we have men here who are locals as well.

Steve: I think there's a stereotype about men in particular being obsessive about boats, and obsessive about woodworking. Is your magazine about love and obsession?

Carl: Oh, sure! Isn't everything that's good in life?

Steve: Sure.

Carl: We do various endeavors. We have an ongoing grassroots project called Family Boatbuilding where we help people new to boating to build a real boat, and they take it home at the conclusion of two and a half days. What I love having watched this over the years is, in so many of the families the girls, the daughters, the granddaughters are into it every bit as much as the boys. Sometimes they have a better ability to focus on what they're doing. They're not so easily distracted. I see that as maybe we'll get our gender demographics more in line with parity. Who knows, I hope in my lifetime.

Steve: So you do see that as something of a trend, of more women becoming interested?

Carl: I think so. My theory is that anybody who builds a boat is going to be a boater for life, and that's why this grass roots family boatbuilding to me offers us a lot of hope for the future.

Steve: A person can't just go down to their Home Depot and buy lumber appropriate for building a boat. Are the environmental and economic issues surrounding appropriate lumber an issue of importance to your readers?

Carl: Oh, very definitely. Very definitely, Steve.

Steve: Tell us a little about that issue.

Carl: Well, on the one hand you've got customers, say more well-to-do customers, who are having boats built and they want them built with exotic wood. I know many boat builders are trying to urge those customers to instead get environmentally conscious and let's educate them on more sustainable products. Now, how successful that will be is hard to determine. If a customer really wants his 60 foot power boat to be mahogany, he'll certainly find a builder. We just have to be cognizant of it and communicate it to the community that sustainability is a big issue.

Steve: Are there lumbers available from the forests in the eastern United States that are appropriate?

Carl: Yes, there are. There's some good wood, and some good forestry management practices that are going to actually increase our output, so that's encouraging.

Steve: What kind of woods are those, and where do they grow?

Carl: Oh, you can have maple, and ash. They grow I guess mostly in the northeast and the northwest. The lumbers we used to log like Sitka spruce is so hard to find now. We're all going to have to adjust to the changing species, which will be good. I mean it's a challenge, but it will be good.

Steve: What are some other major concerns of your readers? Generally, I know that the magazine is largely about the techniques of building boats, and stories about particular designs.

Carl: There are some issues going on in Southern California, for example. There seems to be increased local pressure on marinas not having wooden boats in because they're perceived as being live-aboards, and that's not what marinas want to have. There are water access issues, which are by no means unique to the world of wooden boats, but are an issue for all boats. Those are probably domestically the two biggest issues.

Steve: Carl, we've seen a lot of mergers and consolidations in the mass media, but *WoodenBoat* remains independent. Have you ever been tempted to join forces with some other press or larger organization?

Carl: Not a bit, no. When Jon started this 35 years ago, ever since, and increasingly so, we've had no interest in being acquired by somebody larger. I think a great deal of what I think makes our magazine so great is the fact that we're allowed to be who we are. We're independent, and that gives us freedom to develop ideas and pursue them and hopefully have some of them succeed.

Steve: Do you have any favorite stories from the last several issues?

Carl: No, I think every one's a favorite. I don't mean to be dodging your question, Steve. It's always such a thrill when a new issue comes out.

Steve: So you foresee it remaining as a print magazine, so the web site isn't going to replace the print?

Carl: That's correct, not a bit. I know there's tons of blogs, there's tons of forecasts of the imminent demise of print, but to me something like *WoodenBoat* is a matter of perfection when it's ink on good paper. The web site is used to enhance or expand upon that service.

Steve: How does your location.... First of all I'd like for you to describe for our listeners your location. And then my question is how does that location influence the magazine?

Carl: Well, we're in the town of Brooklin. A local boat builder put up a sign several years ago, "Welcome to Brooklin, Maine, Boatbuilding Capital of the World". That's a little tongue in cheek, but on a per capita basis, we've got a lot of boat builders in this small community of 800 people, including some of the finest wooden boat builders in the world. So the proximity to such a pool of talent is just infectious. It's so great to be able to exchange experiences, to be part of a community that's on the coast of Maine, with lobster fishing families and boat builders. That's really wonderful.

Steve: So do they teach in your school?

Carl: Yes, they do. Some of them do, and on a continuing basis.

Steve: You sponsor a whole series of courses, is that correct?

Carl: Yeah. We have, oh god, what's the number. I think we have about 800 students who go through here in the summer. Those are mostly one week courses where people come to learn to build a wooden boat, design a wooden boat, repair a wooden boat, learn how sail, learn how to navigate. There's blacksmithing classes, you name it, if it has anything to do with wooden boats and the water, we'll put that into our course schedule.

Steve: What's your take on the balance of using power tools and hand tools for that sort of work?

Carl: There are appropriate jobs for each, and that's how we teach the classes.

Steve: How about laminates and other types of wood other than solid woods?

Carl: Um, yeah, absolutely. That's modern wooden boatbuilding, is epoxy and wood, which gives such a strong, stiff, and light structure that can't be surpassed by any other material.

Steve: Carl, what else would you like listeners to know about *WoodenBoat*, either the magazine or the process of building boats?

Carl: I'd love your listeners to just take a look at us. Go to woodenboat.com, see if there's anything there of interest. Believe me, anyone can build a boat. The best way to do that is to just try. Find a boat you want to build, either from our web site, or some other web site, and do it.

Steve: And the variety, I know you mentioned is almost endless. We can go all the way from a kayak or a dory all the way up to a schooner.

Carl: Yeah, absolutely.

Steve: Do the tall ships come through Brooklin?

Carl: No, they don't. We're off the circuit for some reason.

Steve: I have one last question. The woodworking magazines produced by Taunton Press have a real market for the back issues going back to issue number one. Is *WoodenBoat* also the kind of publication where people are very interested in the back issues because of the information contained in them?

Carl: Oh, very definitely. It's interesting. I think we started *WoodenBoat* two months before *Fine Woodworking*. So there are a lot of similarities there. What works in one market tends to work in the other one, as well. Not that our market is nearly as large as *Fine Woodworking's* is.

Steve: Have you ever considered creating the full back volumes, either as a book....

Carl: Oh, yeah.

Steve: Do you do that, are they available?

Carl: We've done it as a DVD, and we're in the process of updating them all again, so yeah, we're definitely doing that. There used to be a copyright issue, but we got rid of that problem

Steve: How did you resolve that problem?

Carl: We just paid one author far too much money to concur . . .

Steve: . . .to include that, because some of the authors had retained copyright on their articles?

Carl: No, but at the time that happened the Supreme Court hadn't ruled in the favor of National Geographic, which was the test case [*Greenberg v. National Geographic Society*].

Steve: I see. Well, Carl, thank you very much. I really appreciate you taking the time.

Carl: It's been a pleasure. I'd love to know when it airs.

Steve: Sure thing. It will be continuously available on the web when it's ready. Our students here in the communications program produce the shows.

Carl: Oh, great.

Steve: So it takes a few days, but not too long. I'll definitely send you the link when it's ready.

Carl: Great. Thanks a lot, Steve, I've enjoyed it.

Steve: Thank you. To subscribe to *WoodenBoat* or to learn more about the *WoodenBoat* enterprise, go online to <http://woodenboat.com>. Thank you for listening to this installment of Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

Periodical Radio 20: *Everywhere*

Interview with Todd Lappin, Editor, February 2008

Here on Periodical Radio I often ask my guests whether they think online versions of their periodicals will replace the printed issues. The topic of today's show, *Everywhere* magazine, puts a whole new twist on that question. 8020 Publishing has created a printed travel magazine from content submitted by readers at their web site, *everywheremag.com*. In the words of Paul Cloutier, CEO of 8020 Publishing,

"Many people believe the web is going to kill off print magazines, but we think just the opposite: By combining the vitality and depth of the Internet with the tactile, inspirational quality of print, we want to make magazines more relevant than ever before."

In my mind they've hit on a great idea. The eclectic mix of reader-written travel stories and photography are very interesting, and the magazine is appealing and well designed.

To discuss the philosophy behind the magazine and what is making it work, my guest is editor Todd Lappin.

Steve: Todd, welcome to Periodical Radio. First of all, can you explain for our listeners who may not be familiar with *Everywhere* the innovative way the magazine produced?

Todd: Sure. *Everywhere* is produced in a really unusual way in the sense that it is almost entirely created by the people who read it. So we have an online community at *everywheremag.com* and it's both a travel a destination web site and an opportunity for people to submit material that we can actually use in the magazine. In the course of submitting travel photos about a place or writing a caption about a place, or even if you'd like, submitting an article about a place, you're both creating a travel web site where people can go to find out what's fun to do if you want to go on vacation, and also you're submitting material which we then use to create a print magazine. The best of the material that's submitted on the web site by our community ends up in a pretty glossy print magazine that we then let people subscribe to, just like a normal magazine.

Steve: What was the original philosophy behind turning Web 2.0 content into a professionally produced magazine?

Todd: Basically it turns out that a lot of the things that everyone heard ten years ago about print is dead, the future of dead tree media and so on and so forth just turns out not to be right. It's true that newspapers are having a difficult time, and the magazine business as a whole is having a difficult time, largely because of some issues having to do with where the advertising market is going. But demand for magazines is pretty solid. One thing that's really clear is that as the web siphons off a lot of the audience that has to

do with data, things that are just about numbers and statistics. That kind of information belongs on the web. But magazines do really well, even now, when they really focus on experience. In other words, when magazines do what magazines do best, which is present beautiful pictures in beautiful layouts and inspire people to get out and do something. That was the thinking, that if you combine the best of both worlds, allow the web to be about data, let the web site be a place where people can submit lots of gory detail about any particular travel destination, but then we can take the best of that and turn it into print. A print travel magazine isn't really about data. You're not really picking up a travel magazine to find out what the phone number of a hotel is. What you really want is a beautiful picture to make you realize that's probably a place you probably want to find out more about. So we use the print magazine to be all about inspiration; we let our web site be about data. That's sort of how the division of labor works between the two.

Steve: What are the advantages of using reader submissions instead of having paid travel writers?

Todd: Oh, there are so many advantages, the list goes on and on. Most obvious of those is the fact reader submissions tend to have a lot authenticity than travel writers. The simple fact is that travel writing is sort of a racket in a way. The writers themselves don't really pay for their experience, they're just supposedly bringing some expertise to the thing which is supposed to be helpful. But the fact of the matter is, a lot of people would rather hear from somebody who was doing it on their dime, and who is just genuinely excited about something. There's just so much more inspiration out there than any travel writer or any editor sitting behind a desk can possibly capture, and this is just a great way for surprising, interesting and authentic experiences to end up in print.

Steve: As an editor, what do you have to do to turn that very eclectic mix of submissions into a coherent issue?

Todd: That's a good question. It's sort of guidelines that we use in our own heads. We don't every really say them explicitly in the magazine, but when you look at the current crop of travel magazines, most of them out there, it's pretty obvious that they tend to bifurcate along two lines. I wrote about this in our first issue. It seems like you're either going on trip to Tuscany, looking for some sort of pretty high end vacation, or you're going backpacking in Alaska for three months. In other words, you're an outdoorsy type. The more we thought about it, that just seems kind of ridiculous. That distinction between high and low is pretty arbitrary. The fact of the matter is, most of the people we know, regardless of their income or their purchasing power, tend to do a little of both in the course of a typical travel year. Wealthy people might do it a little more often, but really at the end of the day they don't travel all that differently. That's kind of what we're looking for. We're looking for a range of experiences that capture the gamut of the kind of travel people do, which is to say that some people in the course of a single vacation may spend

three days backpacking. I just had some friends who just came back from a trip like this. They spent three days on a backpacking trip in northern Vietnam, and then when they got back to Hanoi they spent three or four days in a four star hotel to sort of unwind after that trip. That's the kind of diversity and range that we're looking for.

Steve: How does the reader rating of the stories and photographs work on the web site?

Todd: That's working, we're just getting that part of things going, but basically the way it works, it's not a democracy [laughs]. Just because something gets favored a lot means it ends up in the magazine. What the system does, we use a combination of factors, including explicit votes, views, links, a combination of things that are all fed into an algorithm to generate a measure that we just sort of generically call "hotness." That is to say, things that people are interested in, measured by active and passive measures of community interest. What that does is it allows the stuff that is the hottest or most interesting to float to the top. In the sea of the submissions we're getting and from the stuff that floats to the top, I as an editor then go in and curate that and turn it into a print magazine layout.

Steve: How much editing in terms of copyediting and changing the text is necessary? Or is that all over the place?

Todd: That's a really, really good question. I've worked at a bunch of magazines over the years. I worked at *Wired* at five years, I worked at Time Inc.'s *Business 2.0* for five years. In both of those places, you quite often would end up going in and doing some pretty substantial rewriting of the text. Here at *Everywhere*, my philosophy is that we need to take a pretty light hand, mainly because again authenticity is the most important thing here. The opportunity for people to let their own voices shine is really I think what gives the magazine so much of its energy. What we tend to do is we will often trim things down. People do tend to write a little bit long, which is actually a good thing. We do our own basic fact checking, to make sure references are correct and so on and so forth. You know, tighten things up a little bit, add our own headlines, add our own subheads, and then again just sort of package the thing. And also we do of course send them out to a copyeditor. They do get copyedited. So what we're trying to do is take the submissions we get, make them as professional as we can without really going in and doing very substantial revisions or editing. If we have a question, we will go back to the member of the community who wrote the article and ask them a little bit here and there. In other words this part didn't make sense, what did you eat, what was the name of the hotel where you stayed, some basic questions like that. But we don't do what you would do at a traditional magazine, which is revise a piece wholesale and say to the writer, "Could you just basically do another draft for us?" We don't really do that.

Steve: So you're really striving to give the authors their own voice, as opposed to having one voice for the whole magazine.

Todd: Exactly. We're not at all about having one voice for the entire magazine. Just because the whole point of the exercise is to really allow the enthusiasm of the community to rise to the surface. We want that to be first and foremost. That's the reason why you would read *Everywhere* as opposed to any other travel magazine, even independent of the fact of how it's made. In other words, I think *Everywhere* needs to work as a magazine on its own, even if you never knew the fact that it's created by its readers. It just needs to be the kind of thing, that if you pick it up on the newsstand amongst other travel magazines, you'd just instantly say, "Wow, this magazine is different!"

Steve: I'd like to momentarily go back to the peer commentary aspect of it before moving on some of the things about the magazine itself. Some scholarly journals have experimented with open peer commentary, but the problem has been very few articles actually get any comments. In your view, what's the critical mass of folks that you need to make commentary to make peer commentary work, to be a valuable resource?

Todd: That's a good question. *Everywhere* is just getting started as a community, so I would not claim that we've got it all completely figured out. The community itself just launched in late November, so it hasn't been in existence for all that long. But from some of the other magazines this company does, this company also does *JPG Magazine*, which is a photography magazine, and a lot of the general things we see about web community, it is a bit different from the scholarly community. In scholarly communities, there are incentives that come into play in a situation like this that do influence it. Obviously reputational capital is really important, and of course that would come into play in a scholarly environment in the sense that if you're the kind of person who consistently says smart things, people just start to know your name. You can build a brand for yourself, just through your participation. But there are other things that come into play here. This is an opportunity for people who would not normally get published to get published. Frankly, there's a huge incentive for a lot of our contributors to be able to say, "Look, Mom, I'm in a magazine!" We see the impact of that all over the place, both in terms of the kind of participation we get online, and actually the kind of newsstand sales we see. We've found with *JPG* at least, *Everywhere* again is just getting started, but with *JPG* the number of copies that fly off the newsstand is pretty dramatic, relative to industry norms. Largely because, we believe, the viral effect of "Look, I'm in a magazine." A lot of the contributor's friends and family go and pick up a copy. The upside is this is basically there's a little of an "American Idol" component to a lot of this, which I don't know if it would be the same in a scholarly context. There's an openness to it, an accessibility to it, and the opportunity to have your moment in the spotlight. I think that's really compelling for a lot of people.

Steve: I'm hearing you say that "Look, Mom, I'm in a magazine!" still carries more value than "Look, Mom, I'm on a web site!"

Todd: Absolutely, for all the reasons that we alluded to earlier. A web site is nice, and it's important, but there's a sort of gravitas and depth of the experience in a magazine in the context of high color, high gloss print page which just doesn't translate to the web. Again, this is what the experience of a magazine very different from the experience of a web site. It affects the reader experience, it impacts the contributor experience, and it's almost subliminal in terms of how we respond to the two mediums differently.

Steve: The graphic design of *Everywhere* is very appealing, at least in my eye. How did you and your team decide on the look you want for the magazine?

Todd: There's a bunch of things that have gone on. Obviously there's the basic identity of the magazine, the logotype itself. I realize this is a podcast, so people can't see it, but the logotype looks a little bit like an airline route map, with what we call them jet lines shooting off from the Y in *Everywhere*. That was meant to be obviously a metaphor for travel, and also a metaphor for the web of people who contribute to the magazine. It's one of those images that instantly evokes the feeling of travel and exoticism and going somewhere. That was the basic element of the identity. Beyond that, we were just looking for something that looked very contemporary, very simple, but very sophisticated. We also wanted to allow the photos to really shine. In other words, we really want this to be a photo rich magazine, because we get amazing photos from our contributors. It's just absolutely incredible. We want them to be given as much play as possible. Lastly, the general format of the pieces tends to be relatively short form. We don't do a whole lot of long form narrative. A long piece for us tends to be about 1200 words. There are a lot of shorter pieces. There's a bunch of reasons for that. Structurally, some are due to the contributor side. I think it's a lot less intimidating for people if they don't feel they have to be Rudyard Kipling and write this amazing opus. You can just sort of jot off something which is a quick thought. Actually that's enough to get published. We have a whole section of the magazine called "Postcards," for example, which is nothing more than user submitted photos with about a paragraph of text describing what was going on at the moment when the photograph was taken. The metaphor obviously is a print postcard, the kind of thing you would write on the back of a picture if you were sending it from somewhere else. This is the same idea, except it's your photo and it's a digital photo. Tell us what you would have written if this were an actual postcard. That's an example of how we're using short form writing and very rich pictures to tell stories in a different kind of way.

Steve: Do you have to get the original photo files from your readers? I wouldn't think uploaded files on your web site would be of high enough resolution to go into the magazine.

Todd: They are. We're having some internal debate about this, but we have a requirement. We won't accept any photo that's less than 2000 pixels wide. So we have a minimum size requirement to upload a photo to the web site. For that very reason, that we just want things that we always know we can use them if we needed to as a two-page spread. You can do that with 2000. Even 2000 is a little small for a two-page spread, but beyond a two-page spread it's good for almost anything else you might want to do. That gives us a lot flexibility to run photos big, to run them small. Almost every photo we get is of sufficient quality. Again, there's some debate about whether we should also allow lower resolution photos. While it's true we do a lot of big pictures, and we're really into photographs, we also nevertheless do a fair number of photos which aren't all that big. Like every magazine does, we use inset photos, and collages and so on and so forth. You don't need very high resolution photos for that. So that would maybe lower the bar for entry for some photographers. But anyway, that's an ongoing debate we're having. For the moment it's working great. We're getting amazing contributions. My favorite example is we just sent the second issue of *Everywhere* off to the printer, and the cover came from a reader. It's a genuine reader submission, was just sitting there on our web site that somebody had given us this fantastic picture, with a journalistic quality to it, taken on the roof of the Standard Hotel by the pool in Los Angeles. It's this great scene that captures the sociology of the rooftop pool in downtown Los Angeles, and sort of how bizarre that is. It came through the transom from a reader, actually a traveler who was visiting Los Angeles from France. It was good to go. All we really did was a little bit of color correction and there it is, the cover of our next issue.

Steve: Todd, many magazines are launched on a wing and a prayer, and most new magazines fail. But you guys aren't working from your kitchen table, you're obviously playing in the pro league from day one. Can you tell us about the experience your team is bringing to *Everywhere*, and talk a little bit about what it takes to launch a successful magazine?

Todd: Sure. Being well capitalized helps quite a bit. 8020 Publishing, the company that publishes *Everywhere* is working with and is backed by Minor Ventures, which is a venture capital firm created by Halsey Minor, who is originally the founder of CNET networks. We start out almost more like a technology startup instead of a traditional magazine insofar as the funding model is concerned, which is nice, because it does mean you can start from the gate and not have to do the kitchen table edition. I know people who have done the kitchen table version and have succeeded at it, and I have phenomenal respect for them. But it is nice to be able to come out with a magazine that from day one looks pretty good. That's it, but it's actually a very small company. Even though the company's doing two magazines and has a web site, the entire team is about thirteen people. That's basically executive leadership, editorial team, designers, and software engineers, which is not all that many people. That's pretty much a goal, to really keep the

editorial overhead as low as possible, to always try to be as lean as possible and to use technology to drive costs out of the cost of making a magazine as much as possible. Certainly one thing that we believe very strongly is that the business model for magazines is changing, and has to change. Alluding to some of the comments I said earlier, the old billboard model of advertising, if you put it there somebody will notice is clearly not working as advertisers have the opportunity to use more targeted media. They get used to doing that more and more through things like Google and online. So we're moving more to a circulation driven model, where you're asking the people who subscribe to the magazine to actually pay the cost of the magazine. In other words, make circulation a profitable enterprise as opposed to something that is subsidized by advertisers to demonstrate demand for the product. On the one hand, the business model on the publishing side looks like that. On the editorial side, the goal is to keep the overall cost structure as lean as possible so you can make circulation profitable, and make the magazine profitable on relatively low circulation numbers on their own basis, independent of having massive amounts of advertising. The circulation and enthusiasm the magazines generate makes them the kinds of things people want, and there's enough people who want them that they become profitable.

Steve: 8020 Publishing now publishes a photography magazine, *JPG* that you mentioned a few times as well as *Everywhere*. What other topic areas do you see as ripe for the reader-contributed, Web 2.0-to magazine publishing model?

Todd: Well, we debate this all the time. I don't think there's a huge hurry to launch any more magazines. Right now we've got two, and they're both start-ups. They're off to a good start, but we really want to make sure that these work before we continue expanding. But, with that having been said, there is obviously a goal to essentially build a platform that we can use to launch to more and more magazines, and to really have that down so it's just a matter of turning the key and getting the design going. You can repeat the process we've created here. There are some obvious categories. There's a bunch of sort of base level questions we ask when considering a category, along the lines of "Is this a community of people who are extremely enthusiastic about the topic?" "Is this a community of people who self-document, are they already in one form or another on the web commenting on the topic and taking photographs and so on?" If you look at most of the enthusiast categories, they would fit the bill.

Steve: What would be some examples?

Todd: Skateboarding is an obvious example of people who already doing that. Or almost any kind of sport like that: snowboarding, skiing, surfing. These people already do a great job of documenting their sport. There's a lot of opportunity there. Automotive. There are a lot of car magazines, but there aren't any user created car magazines, but there's an awful lot of people who take pictures of their cars and are passionate about cars and write

about cars. That's an opportunity. Fashion is another example, street fashion especially, obviously. Less runway fashion and more everyday street fashion would be an opportunity. Those are just a couple of examples. All of them are united by strong communities of people who are self-documenting. Then it would just be a matter of trying to encourage them to participate in a community where they would have their documentation translated into print.

Steve: Back to *Everywhere* itself. Thanks, that was very interesting. For *Everywhere*, do you worry much about the competition? One might think the travel magazine market is pretty saturated.

Todd: You know, I alluded to this earlier. It's entirely possible that I'm wrong, and this is just pure hubris, I always remain open to that. But I wrote about this in our editor's letter. Really there is no exaggeration to it, when 8020 first approached me to edit the magazine, I did what you'd do. Head down to your local news stand and sit there and stare at the category, and stroke your chin, and say "What does this tell me?" It was just really, really, really dramatic to me, that there was no travel magazine that did what this magazine should do and can quite naturally do, which is to convey a more authentic experience and convey a more diverse experience than the category does right now. Frankly, I don't know anybody who gets many of the current crop of travel magazines. It's not because they don't travel or aren't interested, it's just because the magazines don't really speak to them. As an editor, I've just always loved these opportunities, when you sit there and look at the marketplace and see this glaring gap between the different publications. We know that these sorts of things can work. Some of the magazines we look to for inspiration, I'm friends with most of the people who run these magazines, so there's a little bit of a brain trust that I can tap in thinking about this. For example, *Readymade* magazine and what Shoshana Berger did when she took on essentially the shelter category and Martha Stewart and gave it a more authentic voice, a younger voice, and a more diverse voice. What *Make* magazine, the folks up at O'Reilly have done with the notion of the hobbyist, and what they did with magazines like *Popular Mechanics*, which in the 1950's and 1960's was a kind of thing where Dad would go out into his garage with his issue of *Popular Mechanics* and build a boat trailer. *Make* magazine has rediscovered that enthusiasm, but with an electronic and digital edge. Again, really found a niche for itself in a category that has become increasingly sort of abstracted from the actual bit about getting your hands dirty and doing things. You can see these success stories happening, and they're all very analogous in the sense they are seeing an opportunity in the editorial marketplace and really going after a group of people who are not just interested in being passive consumers of the magazine. They want actively be participants in it. They want to do the things that the magazine can teach them how to do, and they want to take their own interests and channel them back into the magazine, to say "Hey, look what I did!" The travel category seems really, really ripe for that.

Steve: Todd, is there anything else about *Everywhere* you'd like to tell us before we conclude?

Todd: It's just an ongoing experiment. As I said, the online community is relatively new, and the kind of submissions we're getting are completely encouraging. We shipped the second issue largely with user submitted content, and that was fantastic, also very encouraging. We're just very excited to see where it's going to go. The job here is to be more of an orchestrator than to really lead the community. We're excited to see where people are going to take us, what kind of places they want to go, what kind of places they're going to discover. The opportunity to put those stories into print is pretty exciting.

Steve: Well, Todd, I was very impressed with the first issue, and I wish you great success.

Todd: Thank you so much.

Steve: Thank you very much for being on the show.

Todd: My pleasure.

21: *National Identities*

Interview with David Kaplan, Editor, March 2008

Our topic for this installment of Periodical Radio is *National Identities*, a quarterly scholarly journal published by Taylor & Francis. In the words of the publisher, “*National Identities* explores the formation and expression of national identity from antiquity to the present day. It examines the role in forging identity of cultural and political factors by examining how these have been shaped and changed over time.”

Cultural factors include language, architecture, music, gender, religion, the media, sport, and encounters with ‘the other’. Political factors include political structures, wars, and boundaries. Each issue contains six or eight research articles and a handful of book reviews.

My guest is Dr. David Kaplan, who is one of four editors of *National Identities*. Dr. Kaplan is a Professor of Geography at Kent State University.

Steve: Dr. Kaplan, welcome to Periodical Radio.

Dr. Kaplan: Okay, thank you.

Steve: Let’s begin with the founding of *National Identities*, which began publication in 1999. What previously unmet need does the journal fill?

Dr. Kaplan: Well, it’s an interesting journal in that it falls in some ways into an area that deals on one hand with nationalism, on the other hand with ethnicity, and those two areas have been pretty well subscribed. There are some very good journals, for instance there’s *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, which I believe is published by Blackwell, that’s one of the preeminent journals in regard to ethnicity. There’s *Nations and Nationalism*, I’m not sure who the publisher is, but it’s a nice journal. In fact, it’s edited by one of the preeminent people involved in nationalism, a gentleman by the name of Anthony Smith out of England. But this seemed like a good journal to begin to fill in some of those holes that were there between those different types of journals dealing with ethnicity on one hand and nations and nationalism on the other. Now, I should say in the spirit of full disclosure that I was not part of that founding group. The journal itself was founded by a gentleman who taught at the University College, London. He still teaches there at the College of Queen Mary, a guy named Peter Catterall. He was essentially the founding editor. Initially the editorial group included four people, three of whom are still there, then an additional geographer who is out of Berkeley, and in a couple of years he stepped down and I took over from him.

Steve: I noticed that *National Identities* has four editors residing in four countries. How do you make the logistics of that work?

Dr. Kaplan: Well, it's actually kind of tricky in certain ways. There's huge time zone differences, so one thing is I've never actually been able . . . Well, we had a conference call once that involved all of us. The only reason we could do that was because the person from Australia was visiting England. So he was able to come together and of course the person who's in Germany, she's in a pretty close time zone, so I was able to call in from the United States and be able to kind get everybody together. But if everybody's in their home countries it really is impossible. People would have to get up in the middle of the night to have a conference call. Most of what we do is by e-mail. We have a lot of e-mail discussions back and forth between us. We have had a few meetings. Last September I went over to England and I was able to meet with Peter, who's the gentleman from England, and also Elfie Rembold, who's out of Germany. She came over for that, and we were able to go to the publishing company in England.

Steve: Taylor & Francis.

Dr. Kaplan: Taylor & Francis, that's it.

Steve: David, how did you come to be one of the editors?

Dr. Kaplan: I started off when the journal was founded, I was a book review editor. There are two book review editors and four editors. I started doing that, and then Peter asked me if I wanted to be a regular editor. I'm not quite sure what the motivation was, but the person who had been doing it either wasn't doing it, or didn't want to do it any more. So I said, "Sure, that would be interesting." I certainly enjoyed working on the journal as a book review editor, so I thought being an editor would be kind of fun.

Steve: Let's shift back to the content area of the journal a little bit. Could you give us a few examples of how national identity can be distinct from a nation's political organization?

Dr. Kaplan: Oh, yeah. There's lots and lots of examples of that. There's a lot of stuff we do that has to do with issues related a lot of the cultural aspects of nationalism, and some of the symbolic aspects of nationalism. For example, this was a special issue that just came out last year called "Riverscapes and the Formation of National Identity." It looked at all the different aspects by which rivers help to frame how people look at their own nation. For example, the importance of the Seine River in France, or the importance of the Jordan River in Israel. These are important aspects of how national identity is formed. We think of nations . . . one of the biggest confusions a lot of people have is confusing nation with state. Anybody who studies nationalism makes sure that they separate those

two. The state is the political entity, the state is the actual founded country that has a governance, that is generally sovereign, meaning it has control over its own borders, it has control over the territory within the borders, it has control over the people who reside on that territory, and so on. So that's one thing. That's considered a state. A nation is actually a group of people who feel that they belong together, and that they really help to form a unity, and a country of some sort. A nation is sort of a cultural idea, a state is more of a political idea. Very often when people look at states, at countries, they'll say "Oh, they're nations," but they're really not, they're just states. In fact, somebody's estimated there are as many as 5,000 nations in the world today, in the sense of people who feel they belong together as a single country, and that they owe that country a certain degree of loyalty.

Steve: Boston Red Sox fans often refer to themselves as the "Red Sox Nation."

Dr. Kaplan: [laughs] I love that term "Red Sox Nation." [laughs] Everywhere, you always hear about "nation", "Cincinnati Reds nation." I think that's just one of the uses of the term "nation," but the political scientists and political geographers, people who study nations and nationalism and issues like that, they have a little bit more of a defined idea of what a nation is. There has been a lot of scholarly literature that talks about how nations are constructed, exactly how nations are defined. Very often it comes down to the point of what's a grouping that one is actually willing to die for, and that's a nation. Now I know Boston Red Sox fans are pretty adamant about their Red Sox. Growing up in Massachusetts I remember that well, but I don't know if they're willing to die for the Red Sox.

Steve: One of the questions I prepared was that scholarly journals are a product of academia, and academia has a culture, and a geography, and I daresay even a mythology. But they don't really form a nation. Is the bottom line because academics aren't willing to die for their colleges or die for their disciplines?

Dr. Kaplan: Huh, that's interesting. So you're saying that they're not really a nation.

Steve: Well, I'm asking you, actually. From your perspective, would you call academia a nation?

Dr. Kaplan: No, not in the technical sense, not in the way nations are defined. One of the problems of the term "nation" is that it is over used. We confuse nations with political states. They can be the same. There are a few so-called nation-states where the political state contains the nation. Japan is often given as an example. Another one is Iceland. Very often what you have are states that really contain several nations, like Canada is an excellent example of that. You have the Canadian state, but I think the French Canadian people in Quebec, and even outside of Quebec feel very much like they're a distinct

nation. When you get beyond the political and the cultural aspects of nation and state and start talking about sports groups or groups of people of some sort or another, I think that's when you begin to get into a very loose use of the term, just trying to talk about any grouping of people. I don't think that's technically accurate, although I can see where it's coming from.

Steve: Can a nation exist without a national mythology?

Dr. Kaplan: You mean just sort of . . .

Steve: Well, do all nations have a mythology?

Dr. Kaplan: I think they do, yeah. I think a state can exist without a national mythology. You can just construct a state. But in order to have a state that also has some sense of national identity within it, which is actually very important in order to create all the different ties that help make a state cohere. I think if you don't have a national mythology, you have to build one. In fact, it's very interesting, because there were a number of states that were created at various times, but one of the biggest periods of time was during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century when all of these states kind of came out of empires and things like that. A lot of them actually tried to do the things they felt would help create more of a national identity. Czechoslovakia, for example, particularly the Czech part, didn't really have a national language. So they sent people to create a Czech language that would help them get the sense of identity. The same thing is true even with the Zionists. There wasn't really a modern form a Hebrew, so they had to create the modern Hebrew language. A lot nations work at creating the mythology, creating the sense of history, whether it's accurate or not, but something people can really cling to and to help unify them through good times and bad.

Steve: I'd expect some listeners might think "Gee, the United States doesn't have a mythology," but what would be some examples?

Dr. Kaplan: Oh, the United States has a very rich mythology. It's interesting, because is the United States a nation? I'd say it really is. It's certainly a political state, but I'd say it's also a nation. But it's one of those nations, like a few others that aren't based on a common ethnicity or originally a common language or common descent. If we talk about a nation such as France, France was built up over a long period of time. Of course that nation was constructed out of lots of smaller nations, smaller groups. But with the United States you had of course the indigenous peoples and the original settlers, then all these people coming from all these different countries. Does that make them a nation? Well, I think it does, but the United States is what some people call a civic nation, or almost an ideological nation, in the sense it isn't so much the common ethnicity that binds people together, but really the common ideology, the common sense of mission. A lot of the

aspects of our history help buttress that. So for example, certain ideas about liberty and freedom and independence and things like that are very, very important to the national identity of Americans.

Steve: I noticed several articles in the journal have addressed architecture and it's relationship to national identity.

Dr. Kaplan: [laughs]

Steve: How does architecture express identity?

Dr. Kaplan: Well, I'll tell you first of all, one of the reasons why that's true is because you'll notice one of the four editors is an architect. It's interesting in that we not only have editors who represent different countries in different parts of the world, we also have editors who represent different areas. I'm a geographer, for example, so I represent that. Chris Bernan, who's out of the School Architecture at the University of Western Australia represents the architecture. I can address that to some extent. I think different nations and cultures certainly have different architectural styles that help to represent them. To that extent, it could be something that you could talk about, a clear style that is representative of say, French Canada, or a style that's more representative of England, or of France. I do think that would apply to national identity in that the particular image that architects are able to render is something that is associated with a culture.

Steve: Well, you've mentioned geography and architecture. What other disciplines are represented within the journal?

Dr. Kaplan: Two of the four editors are historians, Peter Catterall and Elfie Rembold are both historians, so history is very well represented. In terms of our editorial board, which we've actually just changed, we've got people there who are political scientists, we certainly look for sociologists who are active in this. I'm not sure if we have anybody who represents literature or aspects of the humanities, but of course nationalism in literature is a strong link, as well. One of the things that a lot of nations really go on is a particular national literature, in particular books that help define them as a people, so that can be very important. But I don't know if we have anybody who specifically does that, although we have had articles that have dealt with that issue.

Steve: What portion of your articles are solicited, and how many are submitted "blind," that is, without any prodding by the editorial board?

Dr. Kaplan: We have four issues a year, and what we try to do is have a mix of what we call special issues, and regular issues. You'll find this in a lot of journals, I think. Journals

will commission or they'll enable a special issue to take place. Probably for other journals you've talked about special issues, or have you?

Steve: Yes, when it's appropriate, I have, yes. Many scholarly journals do, you're right, especially within the humanities and social sciences.

Dr. Kaplan: I think that's something Taylor & Francis is interested in having a few of, although in some ways the people who want to do special issues is greater than the number we can allow, because we have to have an open number of issues for submissions. Most of our articles that get published are submitted blindly to one of the four editors. But we also have people who think about making a special issue about a particular topic. I mentioned before the special issue on riverscapes. But there's also special issues on national identity and diversity, just recently for March 2008 we have a special issue on nation state and identity in Finland. In that case, what happens is there is a person, it can be one of the regular editors, but very often it's another person, perhaps someone on the editorial board, or someone who's very interested in the journal. They work with one of the editors to get manuscripts from various authors. Those manuscripts then go through the same review process as the other manuscripts do. They are sent through the pipeline with the understanding that they will be part of a special issue, so it's a little bit different from the general run of things, where you get these articles that go through as independent entities, and they're placed where they're placed. Here the idea is you may have a cohort of four or five articles, and they're all going in as a special issue. One of the problems, of course, is what happens when one or two of those articles don't make it. Then you have to supplement it with something else, or have a small issue. There can be some problems with that.

Steve: And by don't make it, you mean they don't pass muster in peer review.

Dr. Kaplan: Basically, the way in which, and I'm sure many of your listeners are aware of this, but the way in which manuscripts become articles is that they go through this double-blind review process. How that works is, as an editor, I will get a manuscript, then I'll go ahead and identify three people, sometimes I do two, it depends on how easy it is. I've done four in the past. Two to four people who have some knowledge of the field, either they're experts in the field or they've got some quality that I like. It may not even be particular expertise on this particular topic, but they certainly know a lot about general article construction. I send it out to them. They don't know who wrote this manuscript. I ask them to comment on it, and to give me a judgment on whether it should be published or not, or published with revisions. They get back to me in three or four months, however long it takes. After four months I start to bug them. Then I get their opinions, and what I do is take their opinions and then I look over the manuscript myself again, and see whether or not I agree with their opinions. I get back with the author, and say based on

what the reviewers say and my own reading, I've decided this manuscript ought to be published, or rejected, or the middle ground, which is revise and resubmit. You know, we like the article, but we don't think it's ready yet. So if you actually go ahead and make some of these changes, then you can resubmit it to me and I'll decide what to do with it then. That's the way the normal run of articles come through. The special issue is the same basic idea, except with the understanding on my part that this is part of a special issue. One thing I try to do is send it to independent people, but also send all the articles to one person to look over the whole set, just to make sure there's some kind of coherence. Does that make sense?

Steve: Yes, it does, and thank you. I've addressed that several times in interviews. I'm glad you brought that up, because you explained it very well. Not everybody understands that if they're not academics and haven't gone through the process themselves it's a little bit murky.

Dr. Kaplan: It is a little bit murky, and of course the issue of it is that the editor ends up sending it to people, and the editor has to make a judgment based on what all these people say. In some sense it's a little bit of a box score. If I send it out and I get three people who say "This is great!", I'm just probably just going to go along with everybody, because I feel they're the ones who are there to make the judgment. If three people say it's terrible, I'll go along with that. The tricky issues come when it's split, and it's very often split. You have one person who says it's good, another says it's terrible, somebody else is in the middle. Then what do you do? That becomes a tricky issue for making a decision. Sometimes it just has to do with what my reading is, or how good the arguments are from the different reviewers. Reviewers are all over the map. Some reviewers will write pages and pages and pages of comments. Other reviewers are a little disappointing, they might just write a couple of sentences. I'm certainly going to pay attention to people who make substantive comments, because I can tell they've spent the time to really look over the piece.

Steve: Sure. Does Taylor & Francis have an online system for managing all of this?

Dr. Kaplan: Yeah, they do. It's called, the acronym is CATS. There are a few of these. There's Manuscript Central, that's one that some publishers use. But Taylor & Francis uses CATS, which is, I think, Central Article Tracking System. I'm just getting started with CATS. Before we did it a little more manually, but this system is supposed to really be helpful. I haven't really gone through a whole issue yet going through CATS, but that's supposed to be the way in which it goes in the future. They do have people over there who are there to help and make sure that everything is running on time in terms of the production. So we do get an awful lot of assistance from Taylor & Francis.

Steve: A hot topic among everyone interested in scholarly journals is Open Access, where people get free access to journal articles without having to pay subscriptions. What's your opinion about whether Open Access is a good idea, either in general or for *National Identities* in particular?

Dr. Kaplan: Well, um, I guess, you know . . . I guess the thing is that if nobody has to pay for them, who's going to do it?

Steve: Who's going to pay the bills?

Dr. Kaplan: Well, yes. I can see that there might be some people who are so committed to the project that they're willing to go through all the work involved in putting a journal together. But it's a very difficult situation, because not only do you have the editors, like me and the other editors, we get a very tiny amount of money to do it. It's not so much us, it's that Taylor & Francis hires lots and lots of people for all of the production, the proofing, the marketing, just making sure that everything is running on time. If you have Open Access and there's no revenue coming in, obviously how would you pay these people? I suppose you can have some sort of advertising type of system. I think this is probably one of the issues that's related to any sort of creative product. It's like songs. Most people, they produce songs, and there are a few who decide to make their songs freely available. But for the most part it's a question of trying to come up with a way to generate a little bit of revenue for their songs. Hence comes through iTunes and other types of things. I think the same thing is true of journals. It's difficult to try to create the sort of infrastructure that a journal requires without any money coming in. So then you have to figure out how to get money coming in, and unfortunately journals are not the kind of thing Coca-Cola is going to want to advertise in. You're going to have a problem with that.

Steve: Many librarians and publishers think that within 10 years virtually all scholarly journals will be published online only. No more paper copies. If that were to happen, would you personally miss the print editions of the journals you read?

Dr. Kaplan: Yes. People like the paper copies. I know most of the stuff I do is online, and in fact *National Identities*, the large bulk of what they do is online now. I think what you find is that most journals have an online presence, even the paper journals publish a number of those issues, but then their online presence is beginning to dwarf their paper presence. But it's still very important to have a paper presence. I think that's just one of those things that may not go away. Now I will let you know something in the field of academia, there some debate as to whether or not for purposes of promotion and tenure and things like that, whether or not somebody that publishes in a journal that is online only, whether that carries the same weight as publishing in a journal that at least has a paper presence. I think that maybe goes to the fact that when it comes down to paper

copy, we're limited in terms of the number of pages we can have per year. There's certainly a lot of printing costs that are going into this. So that means, by virtue of that, since the supply of paper is limited, it makes some sort of restriction. Where if it's online, maybe anything goes. Anybody can send something and it's pretty much published automatically. At least that's the worry. I know that's been an issue. Some people argue that they should be treated equally, but other people in terms of making some decisions argue, "Well, you know, it should still carry some weight to have something that's actually out there in paper."

Steve: As a quality control measure?

Dr. Kaplan: As a quality control, because you know with paper there's a limitation, that there's actually a production process going in. In order to invest in paper you're going to have criteria, and editors who are gatekeepers, and people who will ensure quality is good. In other areas, too, what's Wikipedia? There's the whole question, is Wikipedia something that should be a rival to *Encyclopedia Britannica*? Obviously most of *Encyclopedia Britannica*'s business is now online, but they still have their print version, and they still have a lot quality control and a big infrastructure. Now, is that something that should be held as a higher level than Wikipedia? I think a lot of people say, "Yeah". Certainly people at *Encyclopedia Britannica* do. But you know of course Wikipedia allows for an explosion different topics and lots of open access.

Steve: Well David, I've really enjoyed chatting with you. You said before you were a little worried there wouldn't be thirty minutes' worth, but hey, we're there already.

Dr. Kaplan: Okay, well, I certainly appreciate the opportunity.

Steve: Very good! Thank you very much.

Dr. Kaplan: Bye bye.

Steve: Personal subscriptions to *National Identities* are \$146 a year from the publisher Taylor & Francis. Thank for listening to Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

22: *Meatpaper*

Interview with Amy Standen, Co-editor, March 2008

With many magazines and journals, the title and a quick glance at the content immediately let you know what to expect. Figuring out what *WoodenBoat* or *True West* are about is hardly rocket science. But occasionally there's a periodical that must be read in full, and even then can't be summarized in a sentence or two. *Meatpaper* is one of those publications. Based in San Francisco, it is a quarterly independent publication of forty to fifty pages per issue.

Launched in 2007, *Meatpaper* is a well designed, colorful, and serious magazine that addresses the role of meat in our culture from a surprising variety of perspectives. It's not a cooking magazine, but it has a few recipes. It's not a hunting magazine, but it has a few hunting stories. It's not anti-meat, but there's a story about a store dedicated to fake meat made of soy or gluten. There's poetry, humor, and depictions of art featuring meat. One story is about meats Native Americans ate like beaver tail, buffalo, and rattlesnake. There's a story about kosher slaughtering, an interview with a meat inspector, and an article challenging the view that prehistoric men brought home all the protein. Images include Ponca Indians skinning a buffalo, a portrait composed of ground beef on a white background, Sylvester Stallone as *Rocky* in the meat locker, and a woman in a flank steak dress.

What to make of all this? To wrap my mind around what *Meatpaper* is all about and to bring you along for the ride, my guest is co-Editor Amy Standen. She shares editing *Meatpaper* with Sasha Wizansky.

Steve: Amy, welcome to Periodical Radio.

Amy: Thanks, it's good to be here.

Steve: *Meatpaper* is described on the cover as "your journal of meat culture." What is meat culture, and why have a magazine about it?

Amy: Meat culture is something that Sasha and I have been watching with amusement take shape over the last few years. It's a growing curiosity about meat and meat of course as a food, but also meat as a metaphor. You would not believe how many artists we meet who are painting really beautiful, detailed oil paintings of meat, or how many sculptors are using meat as an actual medium for their work. Meat is just this really rich metaphor. It's something that's sort of troubling, it reminds us of our bodies, it reminds us of our mortality and our relationship with animals. But then of course meat as a food is something that there's more and more talk of these days. Chefs are looking into ways of using the entire animal, not just parts of it. I know people who are signing up for amateur

butchering classes right and left, we're seeing that all across the country. People who are learning to hunt who have never hunted before. It's what we call the *fleischgeist*, it's this explosion of interest in meat.

Steve: *Fleischgeist*, a play on the word "Zeitgeist," is of German origin. Is there anything particularly Germanic about meat culture?

Amy: Um, I don't think so [laughs], not that I know of. That would be something certainly interesting if there were. I should say we've had some interest from Germany. We've been written up in a German art magazine, the name of which I'm forgetting. I think we even have a couple of subscribers in Germany. But no, I don't think it's particular to any nationality, though certainly where we see it most is in the States.

Steve: Something *Meatpaper* does very clearly is show the many ways people have relationships with meat, both literally and metaphorically. You touched on several of those areas. I'd like to ask you expand on a few of those that I'll mention that have been featured in the magazine so far. Let's start with meat as imagery in art and cinema. Can you explain a little about that?

Amy: We ran a piece a couple of issues ago about meat's starring role in movies, basically since movies began. We have Rocky punching meat in a meat locker to work out. Meat in that movie was a symbol of raw masculinity, and also of the working class. Only people of a certain class back in those days at least encountered meat in that form. Upper classes would only see meat after it had been prepared. So this rawness and disturbing image of meat and its class connotations were really powerful in that movie. Then you have other movies where meat is, um, I'm thinking of "The Cook the Thief His Wife and Her Lover," I'm not sure he wrote about it in that story, where you have meat that is just supposed to shock us. You know, and not a superficial shock. It's a confrontation with something very troubling, something that has a visceral power over us as human beings. I think filmmakers of course, there's the famous horse head in "The Godfather." Few things you could put in a person's bed in the morning could disturb them more than a huge piece of meat. It's a way of cutting straight to a very basic human instinct, and in a lot of films a real human fear.

Steve: How about meat as a business?

Amy: As a business?

Steve: Yes.

Amy: Well, that's something we're seeing changing. Once upon a time there was just one kind of meat to get, at least here in the States, in the mass market kind of way. That was meat that came from huge industrial ranches. Now we have this whole new industry

that's grown up that is based on the idea of starting small, of treating the animals well, feeding in the case of cows grass instead of corn, and of giving people a direct connection to the lives the animals led. I don't have any numbers to back this up, but I think anyone could tell you this is an exploding industry. It's connected of course to the interest in slow food and the interest in sustainability in general. This is a business that didn't exist twenty-five years ago, at least certainly not at the scale we have now. I think there's a very strong business angle. There's of course meat CSA's [Community Supported Agriculture], this idea of ranches selling meat just to a club of people, so you can buy direct from the ranch and have a relationship with a particular ranch and go to the place where that animal lived. All of these things didn't exist before, and there wasn't an interest in them before, but this is part of the Zeitgeist.

Steve: How about hunting stories, or relationships with meat in terms of hunting?

Amy: Michael Pollan had this very influential work, first an essay that a lot of us read in the *New York Times*, then it was also in his *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, this scene where he goes hunting. He, like a lot of urban foodie people, environmentalists, had never been hunting before, and felt like, "You know, if I'm going to eat meat, I should have the experience of going out and killing it myself, and preparing it, and seeing the entire process that brings an animal to my dinner plate." I don't know if that's what started it, but I hear more and more and more people who are doing this. Apparently the guy who took Michael Pollan hunting is just besieged by requests to take other people out hunting. There is a real interest of people who had no necessarily strong outdoors experience, they didn't grow up in rural areas, but who are saying they want to hunt. They want to see what that's like. I think a lot of people come back from this trip, and think "You know what, maybe I don't want to eat animals any more." But a lot of other people say "I'm going to keep eating animals, but the experience of having killed it myself makes me realize how important it is that I eat animals that lived a decent life." So we hear a lot of that.

Steve: How about cooking rituals? Not just cooking to cook, but the ritual of cooking.

Amy: The ritual of cooking, that's something we hear a lot about. We had a story in I think our first issue about a goat slaughter in Mexico, a very long ritual of preparing this animal, cooking the blood, making various dishes, making sausage from its intestines. This was a ritual that took three days that had special rules for different members of the family. The more you hear about this, when you happen to edit a meat magazine, you start collecting these types of stories from different cultures about how meat is prepared and ritualistically prepared. Of course Native American traditions have a very strong role of ritual in the preparation of bison or any large animal. I think you just find in cultures that meat is a serious thing. It's rare, it's incredibly nourishing, and there's very often a recognition that this is an animal that we had a relationship with when it was alive. That

relationship is changing, and we need to mark that transition somehow. That's a common thing that had been lost in American culture, mostly to the extent that people who are really interested in food practice rituals. We're starting to see a little more of that coming back.

Steve: How about our relationship with meat as a metaphor for how women are depicted?

Amy: Well that was probably, you know when you look at not the early meat art, but the early contemporary meat art, so Jana Sterbak is a Canadian artist who did the first really subliminal piece of meat art in the early 1990's. She made a dress of flank steak and hung it on this sort of wan, emaciated model. People were just really freaked out by this dress. It just really sort of shocked them. It didn't sit well with a lot of people. What Jana Sterbak's point, and the point we've seen a lot of other women artists make since then, is that when dress a woman in meat, or, you know, or have a woman interacting with meat, you're really making a statement about how women have traditionally been looked at in culture, as an object, as a piece of meat, something to possess and devour, something without agency of its own, and something only of flesh, without a real sentience that anyone cares about. That's a dramatic statement, but I think that's the point that a lot of feminist artists have made over time and in some sense continue to make. We definitely saw a big movement of that in the 1990's.

Steve: I had the general sense when reading *Meatpaper* that the general perspective is a feminist perspective. Would you agree with that?

Amy: No, I wouldn't. I mean, I think to the extent that the editors are women, I guess you would say that our perspective is feminist. But you know if it was a magazine put together by two men, you probably wouldn't say that it was chauvinist, not in a negative way, but a masculine perspective on meat. I think both of us of course are actually just interested in everything. I think feminist perspectives on meat are interesting, but I also think stories about meat that really have nothing to do with a particular gender or polemical objective are interesting, too. I consider myself a feminist, but like anyone else that's just one of the ways I look at the world, certainly not the only one.

Steve: Sure, and one of the things I really noticed with *Meatpaper* is, when trying to come up with a description of it, it's impossible to pigeonhole. I get the sense that you and Sasha are really striving to look at meat culture from every conceivable perspective. Is that a goal of yours?

Amy: Yeah, definitely. One of things we've always been clear about, at least with each other, and we try to make it clear in our editors' letters, and when we do interviews, we really aren't taking a stand on what most people consider to be the big question around meat, which is whether or not it's ethical to eat it. We have in Issue 3 two interviews right next to each other. One is with a woman who slaughters animals in her back yard and eats

them very enthusiastically. The other one is with a guy named Jeffery Masson who's a very well known animal activist who lives in New Zealand, and a very serious vegan who makes the point that if an animal is sentient, has feelings, emotions, experiences, we have no right to take its life from it. Animals have a right to life just like humans do. I find that a very powerful argument. So I think we have always wanted to have all perspectives. We think being a vegetarian is a reaction to meat, just the same way that being an omnivore is a reaction to meat. All of those things are part of the *fleischgeist*.

Steve: The other day at Easter dinner, eating our ham and lamb, one of my nieces said that if people had to kill their own animals for meat, if they had to do the killing process, that everyone would be vegetarian. In a way you've already answered that, but what would you personally say to my niece if you'd been sitting there and she asked your opinion?

Amy: I think she's right that a lot more people would be vegetarian. But you know, we have in most cultures throughout history, up until ours, people did kill their own animals. Anyone who grows up on a farm, probably, a big farm, kills animals and eats them. People have been killing animals and eating them for a long time. But I do think that what she's getting at is that you care when you kill an animal. I haven't killed an animal, at least a big one. This is what I hear. But when you kill an animal, you care about that animal. Not that you necessarily need it to live, but you have a real reason to be interested in the kind of life it lead and the kind of death it experienced. I think you're more likely to want that death to be quick and painless, and would have more incentive to spare the animal from pain and fear before its death. So I think she's absolutely right that we would have a different take on eating animals. Probably a lot of people would say "I'm not going to eat animals any more." But I certainly don't think carnivorism would become extinct if we suddenly had to all kill our own animals. I mean, people get used to it, you know.

Steve: Um-hm. The conventional wisdom in magazine publishing is that you have to have a tightly defined and targeted audience to attract advertisers and gain subscribers. *Meatpaper* has this eclectic view of the meat culture, which is a topic that most people wouldn't immediately know what it means before they look into it a little bit. So given all of that, who's your audience, in this context, who are you trying to reach?

Amy: Sure. I certainly don't know who all of our subscribers are by a long shot. But I think we've always felt our target audience is people a lot like ourselves in some respects, and not necessarily in others. I think those are going to be people who have a real interest, and who are curious people. People who have a real interest in what other cultures are doing, and in art, and in food, and who like to take a deeper look at something, which is a very vague description, but it probably also describes the readers of the *New Yorker* or *Harper's* or *Cabinet*. These are all magazines that basically hang on an

editorial direction that is just curiosity and quality. I put us in those groups of magazines. I'd say we're even a little more tightly defined, because we have this single theme to our magazine which is meat. There is no magazine anything like that, like *Meatpaper*.

Steve: Right.

Amy: That has served us really well.

Steve: Who are your writers, and how do you recruit them?

Amy: You know, they've really just . . . the bigger we get, the broader our subscription base, the more bookstores we end up in, they really just come to us. I should be doing more recruiting of writers than I actually do, but we end up with a lot of people who pick up the magazine who think it's really interesting, or who Sasha and I know because I'm a writer and a radio producer, and Sasha's a designer, so she meets a lot of artists. People come to us and they say, "I have this idea." They just kind of get it. This seems like a great place for a story that's been kicking around in their head. So we get submissions all the time. We get a ton of them. We of course like anyone else turn down most of them. But our writers have been coming to us so far.

Steve: Who does your graphic design? I thought it was very good. I take it Sasha?

Amy: Yes, it's all Sasha. Sasha takes complete credit for that. We have a lot illustrators and artists who contribute in various ways, but Sasha is the designer.

Steve: How did you guys learn how to produce a magazine?

Amy: Umm, we kind of figured it out as we went along. It was really something. It's been a real learning experience for us. I have a background in journalism. Sasha has a background in graphic design and print production, so she knew printers, and how to design the magazine, mostly. I would say that the other parts of this—subscribers, advertising, the whole business end of it has been something that we've really just figured out. Bulk mail, the business of running a magazine has been really humorous, actually, and really fun, and every issue has been drastically easier to put together than the previous issue. We've pretty much made it up as we go along. We ask for help from a lot of people. We had someone who helps us sell ads, too, which is a critical part of it.

Steve: I noticed that so far that *Meatpaper* has fairly few advertisements. Do you think a meat factory corporation like Tyson or Simplot would ever advertise in *Meatpaper*?

Amy: I wouldn't want to rule it out. We need more ads, and I wouldn't rule out the possibility of somebody like that advertising. I think they would be smart to. Of course I'm as biased an opinion as you could get on this, but I think anyone who is dealing with the meat industry these days is seeing that it is changing, and that people want something

very different from their meat producers than they used to get. I live near a Safeway, and I also live near a tiny artisan butcher shop that does only meat from northern California, meat that was raised sustainably, and that place is packed all the time. They have lines out the door. I think if you are a meat company, you are seeing that you need to start taking a more intelligent line to your customers. You need to start giving them more information, you need to start treating them like intelligent people and not just people who blindly buy whatever is on the grocery store shelf. Of course I feel like advertising in *Meatpaper* would be a great way to demonstrate that new consciousness, but I'm sure that's the case we'll try to make at some point, but we haven't yet.

Steve: Launching a new magazine is always risky business, even for big companies with deep pockets. Are you and Sasha glad you took the plunge?

Amy: Oh, yeah, of course! It's been fun. And actually we're doing fine. We work for free. We both have day jobs, and this has not been a big money maker. We certainly weren't expecting it to be a big moneymaker initially. We've been only pleasantly surprised by how well we're doing, how many bookstores we're in and how many subscribers we have. What we see is constant growth. It's been a really, really fun experience. It's very tiring and everything else, but what an adventure.

Steve: Is it the classic kitchen table, or do you guys have an office?

Amy: [laughs] I would say it's definitely the classic kitchen table, apartment living room scenario. We look a lot classier than the impression you would have if you came and saw us.

Steve: A few months ago I interviewed the editor of *WoodenBoat* magazine based in Maine. It started as a kitchen table publication in the 1960's and now it's a very large enterprise.

Amy: Well that is a great example for us. You do see new magazines starting up all the time, and they get investors, and they hire a staff, and they hire really famous writers and photographers and everything, and they create a huge amount of debt, and the risk is just gigantic. Neither of us have the resources to do that, so we were forced by our own very, very simple salaries to keep this small. So we have kept ourselves out of debt, and we've kept ourselves on a scale that we can manage. In a way we're more sustainable than a big risky adventure like, I can't think of example right now . . .

Steve: Like some Condé Nast magazine. . .

Amy: Something like that, where you just have an initial outlay of three million dollars. That's just not what we're doing. So I think we sleep easier at night knowing that's not the boat we're in.

Steve: Where would you like *Meatpaper* to be in five years?

Amy: Umm, I would like it to be nationwide. Actually, I would like it to be international. We are seeing that happening, but our main distribution points are the coasts. But we'd like to see it going into progressive towns across the country, and we'd like to see much broader international distribution. We would like to have our content reflect that more. I mean, we've had stories from Israel, Mexico, Australia, Tunisia. We've tried to keep an international balance going, but we'd like to develop that even more. I don't think we need this to be on the scale of a Condé Nast publication, but I think we would be very happy if we were reaching people all around the world with common interests, and also that we're getting contributions from all around the world.

Steve: Well Amy, thank you very much for speaking with me today. I very much appreciate it.

Amy: Thanks so much for having us on, it's been great to talk with you.

Steve: Okay, thank you. Subscriptions to *Meatpaper* are \$28 for four issues per year. Subscription details are online at <http://www.meatpaper.com/subscribe>. Thank you for listening to Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

23: Public Understanding of Science

Interview with Dr. Edna F. Einsiedel, Editor, April 2008

This installment of our program is about the quarterly journal *Public Understanding of Science*. Published by Sage, a leading publisher of academic journals, *Public Understanding of Science* covers topics including:

- surveys of public understanding and attitudes towards science and technology,
- popular representations of science,
- history of science education and the history of popular science, and
- science and the media.

To learn about the journal and the topics it covers, my guest is Dr. Edna Einsiedel, University Professor and Professor of Communication Studies at the University of Calgary in Alberta, Canada. Dr. Einsiedel has edited the journal since 2004. Her many publications include her co-edited book *Crossing over: genomics in the public arena*.

Steve: Dr. Einsiedel, welcome to Periodical Radio.

Dr. Einsiedel: Thank you.

Steve: I gather from browsing through *Public Understanding of Science* that “understanding” encompasses both knowledge and attitudes. Could you describe for us some of the issues involved in the interplay between knowledge of scientific and attitudes towards science?

Dr. Einsiedel: Well, that’s a good question, and that is one of the key issues in the field of, if you could call it a field, the field of public understanding of science. I think there has been a dominant assumption, which probably is still in place today, that publics are often misinformed about science, and all we need to do is provide information or educate these publics. Once they know, they’ll come around, or they’ll accept whatever it is you’re promoting, whether it’s new technology or some scientific idea. This is called the “deficit model” of public understanding of science. That model has been pretty much discredited, to a large degree. It’s true that under certain conditions, in some circumstances, publics are misinformed, but you actually have a range in terms of when you’re talking about knowledge, there is a continuum there. Some publics are more expert on some things than others. We know that this notion about understanding is not something that is fixed, and that publics interact with science or science topics in many different ways. Now, if you’re talking about the connection between knowledge and attitudes, that assumption that the more publics know, the more they’ll be supportive has been discredited, pretty much. There is some evidence that knowledge has some connection with attitudes, but it’s not a very strong relationship. There are so many other

factors that come into play. In fact, there is evidence that in some instances, depending on the topic, you have people who are very knowledgeable who may reject the idea that is being promoted.

Steve: You're using the term "publics," plural.

Dr. Einsiedel: Yes.

Steve: I gather from reading the journal some that it's well established that the public is not some homogenous whole. Can you describe for us why the term "publics" is used, and the concepts behind that and the importance of that?

Dr. Einsiedel: Right, there are many different publics, in many different contexts. Depending on the issue, what may be a public for one issue may not be the same public for a different issue. So I think there's a greater understanding that the public is not one whole, or homogenous whole. In terms of degrees of knowledge, just as an example you have publics who are more active than others. I'll use the example of patient organizations. They have expertise on their condition or their disease, and that expertise allows them to interact with scientists on a level that may not be true for other types of publics. So depending the context and the nature of the group you're talking about, you will have different publics for different issues at different times.

Steve: In a recent editorial, you wrote that the field labeled "public understanding of science" has, I'm quoting, "for some time felt the oppressive burden of a label that has been outgrown." Can you describe for us what you mean?

Dr. Einsiedel: Well, what I mean is that we have moved away from this old notion of a deficit model of publics, and clarified our understanding of different publics, what the term "understanding" means, and basically what science means. Science also as an object is not a homogenous object. I mean, under different conditions you may have publics talking about a different kind of science for different issues. For example, let's take the issue of climate change. The science in that context may be very differently viewed than the science in a different context. Take some other issue like BSE [Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, or mad cow disease] as an example. So the notion of public understanding of science has been reflected on and questioned and I think our understanding of what that phenomenon means has changed over time. Each of those words mean different things today.

Steve: If you could wave a magic wand, do you have a term in mind you would use in its place?

Dr. Einsiedel: That's a good question. We had actually thought about changing the name of the journal, except that it has enough of a history that we thought perhaps changing the

name might be more problematic than the problem we're trying to solve. We simply thought of "Publics and Science" as an alternative name for the journal.

Steve: Okay, so that would be more descriptive of what it's really about?

Dr. Einsiedel: It's broader, it's more descriptive. Well, it's broader. I don't know that it's necessarily more descriptive in the sense that it doesn't talk about understanding, but it incorporates enough of a range of arenas, if you will, in terms of the kind of issues the journal is interested in. For example, one of the areas that you will find covered in the journal is the media, and how representations of science occur in the mass media. So you have on a range of topics like climate change, like BSE, like genetically modified foods, that's another common example, you will find studies on media representations of science. Now why is that important in the context of publics and their understandings of science? Well, the media is certainly one very important conduit for people getting information about science, and in those instances where they don't have personal experience with the issue, the media then becomes a more important forum for learning about a topic.

Steve: If you were in charge of a Best Media Presentation of Science award, who would be on your short list?

Dr. Einsiedel: Ah, that's a good one. I would naturally think mainly of Canadian science journalists, but in the U.S. you have really excellent science journalists like Rick Weiss from the *Washington Post*, some of the reporters for the *New York Times* are some of the best writers. So there are quite a number of people, I would say, who do justice to science issues and topics.

Steve: It's interesting to me that you're choosing individual writers, as opposed to public broadcasting, or one of the networks or whatever.

Dr. Einsiedel: Well, it's difficult to choose a network because they will have a range of folks. For example, in a given network you will have a medical reporter, you will have an environmental reporter, occasionally. But some networks do a better job than others, and depending on the issue again, you won't necessarily find consistently very good performance across the board. But I'd have to say I like the reporters who work for the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*.

Steve: Very good. I noticed that one of the issues covered in the journal *Public Understanding of Science* is actions by the public that actually benefit and advance scientific inquiry. Could you give us a few examples of things members of the public have done to advance science?

Dr. Einsiedel: To advance science?

Steve: To help science, to support scientific work.

Dr. Einsiedel: Hmm, that's a good one, only because I've recently been looking at the role of patient organizations in contributing to the scientific enterprise. I'll use as one example a group that has not just advanced science, but made science look different, if I can put it that way. I'll give the example of AIDS organizations, or AIDS patients who were very involved in political activism in getting that illness on the public agenda, and also changing the way science is done in terms of how some patient groups collaborated with scientists in doing things like getting patients involved in clinical trials, in getting procedures around clinical trials changed so that science could proceed faster, for example. Patient organizations have been very active in collaborating with scientists, so that some attention is paid to the disease of interest. There are some genetic diseases, for example, that are considered orphan diseases because there are very few who are affected by those illnesses. But what they have done is they've gotten together as an alliance and then started collaborating with sympathetic scientists. They changed the way science is done in terms of not just paying more attention to these illnesses, but also contributing to the way science is funded. I'm sure you're familiar with a lot of the fundraising exercises that various cancer groups, various patient activist groups have done.

Steve: Oh, yes.

Dr. Einsiedel: They're not just raising money for science, they're actually collaborating in the process of deciding what sorts of research might get funded. I mean, if you think about an issue like stem cell research, you have particular groups that have been quite active in trying to change policy direction on that issue. That's true in the U.S., it's true in Canada. You have some patient organizations that would like to see, for example, more research on human embryonic stem cells. But you know that there's a lot of controversy around doing that kind of work, and so many patient groups that are interested in getting that sort of research funded have tried to find other ways of getting the work done despite the maybe not so friendly policy environment.

Steve: Well thank you, those were very instructive examples. Thanks. I would expect your authors come from many academic disciplines. What are some of the disciplines represented within the pages of *Public Understanding of Science*?

Dr. Einsiedel: Well, there are two areas which keep track of the impact factor of the journal. One is called the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology. The second is Communications. But I would say that the journal actually intersects with a lot of other areas, like Science and Technology Studies, it also has connections with Health Education, it also has connections with Science Communication. So I guess it's a very interdisciplinary journal that way.

Steve: So you receive submissions from . . .

Dr. Einsiedel: From a wide range of areas. We have submissions from people in medicine, we have submissions from people in communications, obviously, but also from philosophers. So it's quite a wide range, including historians of science.

Steve: Given that wide range, do you ever have difficulty finding qualified peer reviewers for the papers that come in?

Dr. Einsiedel: I think that's a general problem with a lot of journals. There are many more journals in a given interest area, so there's competition there, and there's competition too in terms of reviewers. That's always a challenge. The fact that with interdisciplinary journals, I think that challenge is magnified even more.

Steve: So what special efforts do you have to make to recruit the peer reviewers? Is that one of the major challenges of your job?

Dr. Einsiedel: That is one of the major challenges. We have a fairly large database that we try to rely on. We use a rule, try to use a rule, anyway, of not using the same reviewer more than once a year. Sometimes it's difficult to do that. Replenishing or increasing this database obviously is one of the ways we try to maintain currency in terms of the range of expertise that people who have particular expertise in many different fields that relate to the journal.

Steve: And that database is something you do in conjunction with Sage, your publisher, is that correct?

Dr. Einsiedel: Yes.

Steve: Let me change the topic just a little bit now. I recently participated in a colloquium here on my campus about problem-based inquiry. A science professor mentioned during the discussion that students are often surprised, perhaps even shocked, to find out how much uncertainty there is in the scientific process. They tend to think that science comes up with truth with a capital T. Is it a common misperception that science provides truth with a capital T?

Dr. Einsiedel: That's a common misperception, but I would also say that's one of the things that has been changing in the field of public understanding of science. When I talked about this notion of science as a concept, and how it has been changing, and how it's been interrogated and analyzed, one of the things is the issue of where certainty and uncertainty place into the doing of science. I think for a long time we've relied on the expertise, on the unquestioned expertise of science, and one of the factors in that reliance has been the fact we did not think too much about the uncertainties that are embedded in many scientific topics or findings. In the last several decades we have seen where these uncertainties have emerged and essentially portrayed a science that is incomplete

sometimes, that is not all-knowing, and whose authority gets challenged, as well. One of these challenges has to do with how certainty and uncertainty is considered in outcomes. So I think that's one of the things that have changed about our views of the scientific enterprise.

Steve: And improved on the whole?

Dr. Einsiedel: Improved on the whole. I think there is improvement on both sides. That is, in the public domain you do find some scientists tend to be more careful about how they explain their findings. At the same time, it becomes an issue particularly with media coverage of scientific findings where the tendency is to suggest that these findings are more true than they actually are. That is, not accounting for the uncertainties that may be embedded in the findings.

Steve: Those uncertainties are usually well described in the actual published articles, which leads me to something I wanted to discuss a little bit. A hot topic in scholarly publishing and librarianship is Open Access, the model where journals are made freely available to everyone without having to pay a subscription price. From your perspective, is Open Access a good idea?

Dr. Einsiedel: I think it's a very good idea. One of the issues that we are running into is the issue of access, particularly from developing countries. In many instances with a journal that has a commercial publisher like *Public Understanding of Science*, that kind of access is not easy to come by. Now one of the things that Sage does is it tries to provide some kind of access to institutions in countries that are unable to financially support these kinds of subscriptions. That's one way of addressing the issue. Then you of course have journals that are published under the basis of an Open Access system, and I'm all for that, as well. I think there's room for both types of enterprises.

Steve: My library just recently got access to *Public Understanding of Science* through the Sage Online package. In the past, the way they priced the package made it unaffordable for us. But Sage recently, within the last year or so, changed their business model to make it much more affordable for smaller colleges like the College of Saint Rose. Otherwise we really couldn't justify paying the full subscription for a journal such as yours, because it gets relatively little use.

Dr. Einsiedel: Right.

Steve: Have you seen an impact on your readership or submissions with the fairly recent change in the Sage Online business model?

Dr. Einsiedel: Well, one of the elements in this new strategy that they have employed is that they actually run a free trial month, I believe that's the period of time. So this last

year in February and I believe in October or November they opened up the journals to users, so you could try out the journal for a period of time. The statistics in terms of usage are really incredible right during those two months, and you can track the difference between those months and other months of the year. That has also made a difference in terms of interest in the journal, in terms of usage, and I'm all for repeating that trial experiment every year. There should be a window within which you can access journal content.

Steve: Have you seen an impact on the submissions from that?

Dr. Einsiedel: We've actually just gone online this past year, and it's typically the case when you go online you see a spike in the submissions, and we've seen that. The trick is to then maintain that kind of submission rate over a longer period of time. But certainly the online submission process has made it easier for both reviewers and authors.

Steve: Dr. Einsiedel, you're a professor of communication studies. What drew you to inquiry into the public understanding of science?

Dr. Einsiedel: What led me to my interest?

Steve: Yes, and from a background in communication studies, how did that lead you to this?

Dr. Einsiedel: Right. I actually have an undergraduate degree in zoology, and my next short career was to do a bit of science journalism. I did a double major as an undergraduate in zoology and journalism. So I've always been interested in that combination, if you will. I went to the U.S. to do my Ph.D., and that is where I started working on the communications end, but I've always kept this interest in science, and in the early 1990's we started collaborating with researchers in the U.S. and in the U.K. to look at issues around science literacy. That's how I ended up in this field.

Steve: You became editor of the journal in 2004. Are you enjoying it?

Dr. Einsiedel: I'm enjoying it, although my term may be coming to an end this year. I have just too many things on my plate. But I've accomplished a couple of things I was hoping to do, which was to bring the journal into the online world in terms of the submission and review process, and also to increase the impact factor of the journal.

Steve: Excellent. Dr. Einsiedel, thank you very much for being my guest on Periodical Radio.

Dr. Einsiedel: I appreciate it.

Steve: Have a very nice day.

Dr. Einsiedel: Thank you.

Steve: *Public Understanding of Science* is available to subscribers at <http://pus.sagepub.com/>. Individual subscriptions are \$83/year. Thank you for listening to this installment of Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

24: *Psychological Reports*

Interview with Dr. Doug Ammons, Editor, September 2008

The subject of this installment of Periodical Radio is *Psychological Reports*, a bimonthly scholarly journal in its 54th year of publication. *Psychological Reports* is an oft-cited and highly regarded journal. The editors' stated purpose is to "encourage scientific originality and creativity in the field of general psychology." Examples of such originality and creativity in a recent issue include articles on whether evolutionary sex differences impact Nintendo Wii performance, eye color as an indicator of behavior, and the relationship of insubordination with genius. Each issue has about 40 articles filling approximately 300 pages, and there's no advertising.

My guest is Dr. Doug Ammons, one of the editors of *Psychological Reports*. Dr. Ammons, welcome to Periodical Radio.

Steve: Dr. Ammons, let's start with the origins of *Psychological Reports* and your involvement with it, and the relationship between that and your very interesting work as a kayaker and cinematographer.

Dr. Ammons: It's a pretty big question. I would say that I'm the direct outgrowth of my parents' attitude towards science as being a wonderful but limited problem solving tool. The same kinds of things that led them to begin the journals in the late 1940's, early 1950's, and then my interest in kayaking and the out-of-doors and the psychology thereof is all part and parcel of the same thing. The more skilled aspect of learning a skill, the decision processes, those are all aspects that carry over to everything you do. Each thing is the mirror image to a different facet of this general principle that as human beings we are a very fascinating, each one of us are very fascinating animals. Some would say spiritual being that exists in a very complicated universe in with the wonderful prospects in every direction and some other not so wonderful prospects. I don't want to get too general though, Steve, so why don't you ask me a specific question?

Steve: Sure, that'll be fine.

Dr. Ammons: I'll wax eloquent about things that are outside the purview of what you intended.

Steve: All right, to give us some focus, let's begin with the contrast and comparison of *Psychological Reports* and *Perceptual and Motor Skills* and American Psychological Association journals. They're big leaders in the field of psychology, yet Ammons Scientific journals have done very well over the years, been very successful. What do you see as the primary distinguishing differences of your journals from those of the American Psychological Association?

Dr. Ammons: Well, first I'd say that the APA does a very good job. They represent the largest psychology organization in the world, and they've got their plate full of a lot of different things, with 150,000-odd members, and a very diverse membership. They publish the way they see things as a large organization. The contrast really is that we are not a large organization. We're a very small group of individuals. From the very outset the reason for having the journals was to provide an alternative to the mainstream APA journals. The fact of the matter is a lot is going on in psychology in every area that's outside of any major organization. That organization involves the people who are interested in being in organizations, so it doesn't include an awful lot of other people who have perfectly legitimate and interesting views of the world in psychology, particularly here [in the U.S.]. Otherwise they don't have a place to go to be heard, to have their work peer reviewed carefully, and to have an outlet for it. So that's what we provide.

Steve: You're very consciously an alternative to the APA journals. You want there to be an independent outlet.

Dr. Ammons: Yes. Any organization, and I'm not going to accuse any of them of any particular bias, but any organization or group of people, especially one with a clear hierarchy, develops its own political beliefs within the hierarchy, and there's just no way of getting around that. It's a process that develops quite naturally out of the fact that you have a big group people who are trying to do something in general, and they all have their own beliefs. In contrast, then, we don't have this organization. We are not spokesmen for any group. Therefore all we try to do is look at science in the broadest sense and take on anybody who's willing to present a well done article of any kind, be it experimental, or theoretical, or a commentary, or other, take them on and evaluate it without any axes to grind, without any external biases, but purely from the scientific method. I think what that does is you just get . . .there are a lot of people out there, foreign authors, people outside the mainstream, which is what the APA really generally publishes. Really by definition everything in science we believe now at one point or another came on as a reaction to the ongoing consensus of that time, and disagreed with it or contradicted it. Nobody's got a crystal ball for where the field's going to go, or where the world's going to go, what fate will have in store for us. The only thing we can do is leave the playing field open for as many different well reasoned positions as possible. That's the only way that science will progress.

Steve: In the pages of the journal, one of things that comes out as a contrast is that as that process is happening, the APA tends to publish articles that are 20-40 pages long, and those in *Psychological Reports* tend to be quite a bit shorter, 4,5, a dozen pages, sometimes longer, but on average much shorter. What's the reasoning behind that?

Dr. Ammons: Actually, the average number of pages of an article for us is about 10 pages now. It might be a little bit longer in the APA, but it depends on the journal. It

depends on the field, too, so I think if one looked at a given journal and made a comparison, then you'd be comparing something a little more similar. In general, though, we try to cut to the quick. We attempt to have people say what they have to say as succinctly and clearly as possible. One of the things I commonly put on a manuscript when I'm editing, in one form or another I say "write as succinctly and precisely as possible exactly what you mean." I think there's just a little more leeway in other journals for taking a little bit extra. Academics are notorious for liking lots of words.

Steve: Indeed. The front matter of *Psychological Reports* that articles are reviewed by from three to up to twenty peer reviewers. How do you decide how many reviewers an article needs?

Dr. Ammons: I'm the one that assigns reviewers. In each case, with each article, unless it's like a one page note or comment, any normal manuscript that comes in, I'm going to look, I'm going to make an initial assessment, does it fit, is the writing adequate enough to be sent out. If it's not, I'm going to send it back to them, and I might give some editorial suggestions, but also that they really need to shore it up and give a short list of what they need to focus on. With the reviewers, I will always assign six reviewers. We'll go through the first 3 and send those out, and if we don't get response from at least 2, if not 3, then we'll go through the next 4-6. If we still don't have enough, then I will add some more. That upper limit then changes depending on the hot-button issue. If it's an issue that obviously has political problems, that is going to stir up some major controversy, or even minor controversy, I'm going to extend the reviewers to as wide a variety as I can within reason. So the upper number, actually 21 is the largest number, which we've done a number of times, is for papers that clearly hit people square on their hot buttons. So we want to have best set of comments that we possible can.

Steve: How do you recruit your peer reviewers?

Dr. Ammons: We start with our associate editors, and then we have a database of probably 15,000 reviewers, people we've contacted and who have done one or more reviews for us, and that's constantly expanding. I'll start with those two things. It will also come from the reference page of the manuscript itself, and if there's still a problem I will scurry around and attempt to identify some other likely people.

Steve: Do your authors ever recommend a reviewer?

Dr. Ammons: Occasionally.

Steve: What do you think of that? Do you like that information?

Dr. Ammons: That's fine. Typically we would include at least one of those people, because we're going to include three or four others who are going to be different. The

authors I think are pretty good, in my experience, about suggesting people who are perfectly legitimate and fair. I had one notable manuscript about three weeks ago where when once I started looking, it turned out that this author had really tread on the toes of the two biggest guys in this particular subfield, enough so that one of the very first abstracts I pulled up in looking at the topic, these original authors who he was criticizing actually just had an alternative view. Anyway, he had tweaked him so much they had devoted a major proportion of their abstract to debunking him from their standpoint. I thought that was a little over the top. I'm negatively suggestable by nature. If somebody says "this is the truth", I'm going to say, "Let me see. What about b,c,d,e,f,g,h, all the way through j?" and see as Dr. Seuss says, and on beyond zebra. Just because somebody thinks something is the case doesn't mean it is the case, no matter who they are. I take that attitude with all the reviewing. If authors suggest something I'll certainly consider it, and often use at least one, and then look for others. There are many different reasons why people will take one position or another, or want to review, or not want to review. Some people want to review, but they don't have time for it. There are many different reasons. But we all try to get for all manuscripts a minimum number which is at least one more, for a total of at least three. It's typical for a journal to have only one or two. We always get more than that. Every single paper that we publish has been through more peer review than almost any other journal. I should say with that, the nature of our peer review is somewhat different. That has directly to do with our editorial attitudes. I'll say it this way. The easiest thing for an editor to do in the world is to say "I reject this." Then the easiest thing for the editor to do is to rationalize that he's rejecting it because he has such incredibly high standards. Actually, he's just being lazy. The hardest thing to do is to actually engage with what the author has to say and engage what the reviewers have to say, and try to find whatever resolution there might be to further science. The issue is whether your commitment is to further science by helping people do research and help people argue their position, or argue alternative positions, or whether your point of view is just to make life easy for yourself because you're so overworked.

Steve: And before our interview, you worded that to me as "scientific freedom of speech."

Dr. Ammons: Well, that's what I would say. I have a couple of ways that to me express in a nutshell where we're coming from. And the first of those is our journals are the scientific expression of freedom of speech. They're intended to reflect the entire field of psychology world wide. That means they will always reflect highly diverse approaches and topics and positions and any other aspect that some people will disagree with, and other people will agree with. So the issue is that understanding the nature of human and animal behavior isn't just an undertaking of American or European scientists. It's not just an undertaking of the APA. It includes all nationalities and the unpredictable diversity thereof. The other aspect in a nutshell is the scientific method will always be our

touchstone coupled with freedom of interpretation and position. Science is the greatest problem-solving tool humans have ever devised, even if it isn't all that easily applicable to something as complicated as human behavior. Another principle I'd say is that no reviewer has a veto right based solely on their opinion or their personal interpretation. If their objections are based on fact, they can demonstrate a flaw in the analysis or method, or if they can point out a logical fallacy, then their objections are really likely to be sustained by me as an editor. But I will say one thing. That's providing the authors can't justify what they've done, because what they've done might just be a limitation of the current methods. So that is a very difficult place sometimes to balance. Those are key issues about where we're coming from and what we're trying to do. I'd say the last one is that I'm never going to just lop off an author, and reject it without him having a fair hearing. I want everyone to go away, all the authors and the reviewers, my goal is as an editor that all the authors and all the editors go away from the experience thinking that that's the way the scientific method should work, that's the way publication should be done.

Steve: That reputation is known and is a primary, if not the primary reason why *Psychological Reports* has such a good reputation. Would you agree?

Dr. Ammons: Well, I would hope so.

Steve: Let's switch gears a little bit . . .

Dr. Ammons: I'll say one thing.

Steve: Sure.

Dr. Ammons: I don't have any control over what people feel is the reputation. All I can do is the very best I can according to those principles. The difficulty comes in sometimes where people conflate, they mix up their personal beliefs with what they think is true. When you do that, then basically you're saying that something is not true because you disagree with it. That's a very prominent thing. It happens with everybody, with all of us. It happens with psychologists as well in their science. One thing I won't do, is when a reviewer says "no reputable journal would ever blah, blah, blah," I just think, you know, the problem here is you are trying to strong arm me, and the author and everybody else by declaring what is reputable by declaring what is reputable and what isn't. They're declaring what's truth and what isn't, and they don't know. None of us know. That's why we're doing science. It's our best approximation for trying to figure out a little bit about what is true. I find it a totally inspiring process. But when people mistake their personal emotionality for something, they mistake that for scientific truth, well then you know we're just dealing with psychological pathology instead of peer review. So I try to keep that stuff out, and I make a very concerted effort, as do the other editors here, to identify

it while respecting each person's point of view. I hope that message gets through to authors, reviewers, and readers.

Steve: Very good. I'd like to change focus now to a bit of the business end of running the journal. People unfamiliar with scholarly publishing are sometimes surprised that not only are your authors not paid, but they actually pay to have their articles published. Will you explain for us how author fees work, and why they make sense for *Psychological Reports*?

Dr. Ammons: As a general framework, page fees are very common in a great number of areas of science. For instance in geophysics, wildlife biology, cryobiology, paleontology, and a whole bunch of others. If you go in, you'll find page charges anywhere from, for instance in cryobiology about \$25 a page, which is about ours, up to 400, 500, 600, 800 dollars a page for certain other journals. There's a sliding tier. In psychology, though, we are one of the few journals that have a page charge. So we do stand out that way, and that is sometimes something people try to use as a club against us, saying that authors are just paying to be published. The issue is that page charges are just one aspect of a whole variety of ways of paying the costs that it takes to get a journal published. Always, in all journals, those costs have to be paid, or else the journal can't publish. So it takes the place, for instance *Science* and *Nature*, which are excellent journals, half of their pages are advertisements, biochemical companies, biological assay companies, immunology companies and so on are paying top dollar for big ads. We don't have any advertising. The APA designates by budget how much a journal's budget will be. That automatically lops off the size of the journal, purely by central planning. We don't have that. The page charges allow us more freedom in how many pages we can publish, and I think the author or his institution can help support the work, because it's a combined effort. It's really a service for improving the field. Nobody's getting rich off this, except maybe some of the huge for-profit publishers who are charging increases in subscription prices of 15-20% a year. We don't do that. We keep it right down to a bare minimum, and the page charges are really a part of that. So there's all these different mechanisms by which one can cover the costs. Even editors, for instance I would say in my experience none of the editors of the APA journals have any clue about what their journal actually costs to print. The estimate from their main committee is \$8000 an article. So that price has to be paid by somebody, by some way. It can be paid by dues to the organization, but we don't have an organization. When you have dues, it's like having a union. Then everybody has a say, and you have union bosses and politics. We try to stay out of that. So the page charges are part of what keeps us independent. Again, they're completely common across other areas in science, and they're usually much, much higher than ours.

Steve: Right.

Dr. Ammons: One last example is that every journal that the American Statistical Association publishes has a page charge of \$55-75 a page. The statisticians don't blink an eye at that. It's just part of the mechanism for how they're able to have a journal that can publish their work. A magazine is in a different stretch of things. It's a for-profit venture.

Steve: Right.

Dr. Ammons: I actually write magazine articles on kayaking, because I'm a long time expedition kayaker, and I've done a lot of stuff in that area. Sometimes I do stuff for free because I believe in the project. But nobody can put food on the table if they're doing things for free all the time. So magazines function in a very different way.

Steve: Indeed, yes. You currently allow authors to post online the last prepublication version of their articles, even though copyright is owned by Ammons Scientific of the final version. Is that policy working?

Dr. Ammons: It depends on what you mean by "working." I'd say yes, but of course authors would like to just put their article up. But the problem is, when they do that, the copyright basically becomes meaningless, and anybody can copy anything. That's one of the problems with Open Access in general. An author's last prepublication version is their last work. It still includes our efforts as editors and reviewers, but it's still their last work that has not actually gone through completion into journal form. So it's the last best thing. It's a struggle. One would like to have all information available to everybody who wants it. The problem again comes back to there's no way to prop such a system. These things don't just come of their own without immense work by a lot of different people. Unless that immense work is compensated in some way, people simply can't afford to do it.

Steve: So would it be your take that most or many of the advocates of Open Access underestimate and undervalue the work that editors and publishers do?

Dr. Ammons: Well, I think, I'm not sure. You use the word "undervalue." I think there's a difference of opinion. The more activist Open Access Let me back up. First, I think Open Access is a great idea, personally. We actually have an Open Access policy that we started here. The problem comes in how the costs get paid. The most adamant and aggressive of the Open Access advocates are responding to what I consider to be horrific increases the main for-profit publishers, just horrifically huge increases that are completely unjustified by the market and by what the journals actually cost. I mean, 20-25% a year increases. It's unbelievable, and year after year. The libraries pay for those things, the students pay it through their fees, the taxpayers support it in public universities through library budgets. That's where all that money is being skimmed from. So that's where the aggravated Open Access advocates are coming from. They don't like that, and I don't like it, either. The problem is that they in return, when they advocate complete

Open Access, they are looking at the system in an unrealistic way. It does require expertise and time and lots of materials and machinery and special knowledge and equipment in order to put a journal out. You used the word undervalue, and I think they undervalue that. Somewhere in between the rapacious for-profits publishers who are charging exorbitant fees and increases each year, somewhere between that extreme and the Open Access “agro,” someplace in there is a reasonable compromise. That’s what we have been trying to find. I think we are very close to it. If you get away from that Open Access extreme, what you find out with the Public Library of Science journals is that they still are not a viable business model, even though they’re charging \$3000 up front for each article that they publish. They’re still not making ends meet. It’s even worse than that, because they are propped up by very large funds that have been donated to them. It’s a reasonable start-up, it’s a good attempt, but what they’re finding out is that it takes much more energy and money than they thought to make it work. I’m hopeful in the long run that it will work in one way. But the only way it will work is if people actually realistically apprise and solve the problem of cost.

Steve: Dr. Ammons, our time is coming to the end, but I’d like to ask a quick question before we finish up. Do you think *Psychological Reports* will still be published in print in 10 years?

Dr. Ammons: I think so, yes. It’s an issue. It depends on whether libraries still want a print copy. We will always print some, because if the power goes out and everything is online, you have nothing. You might as well be in the Stone Age.

Steve: Indeed.

Dr. Ammons: There is something to be said for Gutenberg.

Steve: Well, Dr. Ammons, our time is up. Thank you very, very much for your time. It’s been a fascinating interview.

Dr. Ammons: You’re very welcome. Thank you for calling.

Steve: A subscription to *Psychological Reports* costs \$440. Subscription details are online at <http://www.ammonsscientific.com>. Thank you for listening to Periodical Radio. I’m your host, Steve Black.

25: *Living Bird*

Interview with Editor Tim Gallagher, October 2008

The topic of this program is *Living Bird*, the member magazine of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology in Ithaca, New York. My guest is Tim Gallagher, editor of *Living Bird* since 1990. Tim is also the author of the books *The Grail Bird: Hot on the Trail of the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker*, and *Falcon Fever: A Falconer in the Twenty-first Century*.

Steve: Tim, welcome to Periodical Radio. *Living Bird* is the member magazine of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Could you describe for us the mission of the lab?

Tim: It's actually an environmental group. Besides being part of Cornell University, it's a membership organization with about 30,000 members. We basically are using birds to give people an entry into the natural world, and get them interested in helping to protect birds and other wildlife habitats.

Steve: Where does *Living Bird* fit into the overall mission of the Lab?

Tim: It's a popular magazine that's aimed at a popular audience, so we're trying to attract a wide range of people, not just scientists. We're also interested in citizen science, that is regular people gathering data across the United States and Canada that we can use to determine which bird populations are in trouble and so forth.

Steve: One of my questions was why a popular magazine instead of a scholarly journal, and you just pretty much answered that. But what's the origin of that focus, of really reaching out to the public rather than reaching to other academics, for the publication.

Tim: Well, our founder, Arthur Allen from the start, you know he first started what's called the Lab of Ornithology in about 1915, although it was nothing like what it is now. It wasn't a membership organization or anything like that. It was in the 1950's when it became more like it is now. But actually the publication at first, when it came out in the early 1960's, it was more of a technical journal on ornithology, and it just came out once a year called the *Living Bird*. We had a very limited membership at that time. It was about 1,500 members. There was a point in the early 1980's when Charles Walcott became the head of the Lab. He thought our work was important enough that he wanted it to go to more people, draw more people in, people who might have more influence. So that's when it became a quarterly popular magazine.

Steve: Why the title *Living Bird*, rather than something like "Cornell Ornithology Lab News"?

Tim: That was actually suggested by Roger Tory Peterson, the famous bird artist and author. He was on the Lab of Ornithology's Board of Directors at that point, actually in the early 1960's. He thought it was important to stress that living birds is what we're really interested in, to keep common birds common and everything, you know. That was a time when birds were being affected by DDT and other things in the environment, and it was our emphasis to keeping bird populations healthy.

Steve: I have a question about terminology. What's the difference between a birder and an ornithologist?

Tim: An ornithologist I'd say, it used to be in the 19th century people were called ornithologists, and they very often were amateurs. They were people who went out into the field and studied birds, perhaps collected eggs and bird specimens and so forth. Now it's more a person who's gone through . . . they're professionals. They've gone through a university and gotten a Ph.D. usually, and they're scientists. A birder is more of a hobbyist, although many of them are very serious, someone who's trying to see as many bird species as possible, and to learn how to be really expert at identifying them. But there's a lot of crossover.

Steve: Why do people have a special fascination with birds?

Tim: They're such charismatic animals. Everywhere you go in the world, birds are there. In a way, you could take a birder and drop them almost anywhere in the world, if they're familiar with the bird songs, that's part of the distinctive nature of every place you go, there's a different avifauna. There will be different bird songs and different birds you see. To me, it's just enriched by life. I can't imagine not being as focused on them as I am. They're so colorful, and the songs they sing are so beautiful.

Steve: Richard Louv coined the term "nature deficit disorder" to describe how today's kids spend too little time exploring nature. In your view, is birding one of the better antidotes to nature deficit disorder?

Tim: Oh, definitely. I have young children, and it's certainly been great getting them involved in learning about birds, and taking them for hikes in the woods and things like that. It's really enriched their lives. I do worry about a lot of children now who just grow up playing video games or doing stuff on the computer or watching television. They're really losing out. That's nothing like the way I grew up. When I was young my friends and I, we would just run wild all day through the woods. Everything was so interesting and mysterious. I just wanted to learn more and more about it. There's not as much of that any more. I hope we can do things to counteract that.

Steve: Does the Ornithology Lab have special outreach for young people? Is that a target audience?

Tim: Yes, definitely. We have a whole curriculum that we give to elementary schools, actually K-12 on bird study.

Steve: Is it possible to become a birder without also becoming a conservationist?

Tim: Not really. I think if you learn about wild birds, and you see how their numbers are declining, I mean some of your favorite birds, when these birds are declining five percent a year and have been for the last 20 years, that's pretty scary. So yes definitely, most birders are conservationists.

Steve: And as you mentioned at the beginning of the program, it's a major focus of the *Living Bird* magazine.

Tim: Um-hmm.

Steve: . . .the conservation angle.

Tim: That's right. Personally, to me, I've been here for 18 years now. When I came here, that was one reason. I came because I wanted to do some good for conservation, and I've steadily pushed this publication to help with conservation. Not necessarily like an advocacy group attacking certain things, but writing about studies we and other people are doing that are showing what is happening with birds and why they're in danger and why we need to try to help their populations.

Steve: The Ornithology Lab promotes citizen science, something else you've already mentioned. What are some things people can do to contribute to the science at the Lab?

Tim: We have a whole slew of citizen science projects, ranging from ones that are really easy to do, like Project Feeder Watch. We have something like 15,000 people involved in that. They just record the species and number of birds that come to their bird feeders. There are other ones that are more in depth, like Birds in Forested Landscapes. We used to have Project Tanager, where you'd go out with recordings and play them and see if tanagers responded. They were really more in depth, including trying to find their nests. We've got one that involves bird houses, the Bird House Network, actually going in and counting the numbers of eggs and young of bluebird and tree swallow nests and boxes, and whether they're successful or not. It's actually really amazing the amount of data we get in from our citizen scientists. It's really valid data. There are always some people who maybe don't know enough, but we've got filters to be able to find something that's probably not accurate. For example, house finches several years ago, a lot of house finches were getting an eye disease. It seemed to be spreading across the East. We asked all our feeder watchers, we formed a new program to study this house finch eye disease. We've been able to map the spread of it all across the East and even to the West now in a

way that no one's been able to track the spread of a wildlife disease like that before. It's really interesting data.

Steve: So the data with the citizen science programs are well respected within the professional ornithology field?

Tim: Yeah, they are. There have been numerous scientific papers published based on this data. People were skeptical at first, but they're not now. It's very valid data.

Steve: That's wonderful. One of the things I've noticed in the printed magazine *Living Bird* is the photography is really exceptional. Who are your photographers, and what are you looking for in the images published in the magazine?

Tim: We have a lot of the top wildlife photographers in the country, people like Arthur Morris and Marie Read. Frans Lanting has done some photo essays before along with a lot of other very well known people. I look at stuff from other people, too. There are up and coming photographers who send me samples of their work and I look at it, and if it's good I'll send them our list. Every issue we have a list of our photo needs that we send out. I go through them with a designer and we figure out which are going to be the best pictures to use. Since we're dealing with birds, the visual presentation is everything. People want to look at beautiful pictures of birds, so we get the best pictures and design them in a pleasing way. We also have some of the best pre-production quality I've seen in a magazine. We use a sheet fed press and everything.

Steve: That pre-production process has certainly changed over the years, hasn't it?

Tim: Oh, yeah! I've been around long enough to remember taking physical manuscripts over to a typesetter and then having the paste-up of the magazine. On the last day [before going to press] you were making fixes with Exacto knives cutting letters. It's been interesting. Now we do it all on the computer.

Steve: A few years ago I spoke with Elizabeth Folwell, who's the art director at *Adirondack Life*, and she went into some detail about how much things have changed over the years. It's really amazing.

Tim: Yeah.

Steve: With all of the information the Ornithology Lab puts up on your web site, why continue having a printed magazine?

Tim: Well, I think a significant number of our members still want to get a physical magazine. I don't know how it'll be in 10 or 15 years, I mean a lot of younger people are used to seeing things online. But the way it is right now, we do surveys about things like that, and people love getting *Living Bird*, and they like having it on their coffee tables for

people to look at. Probably for the rest of my career we'll still be putting out a physical magazine. We have a really nice web site now, too, of course, <http://livingbird.org>. It captures a lot of what the issue looks like, and has extra multimedia features and all that. But I still see it as an added bonus. I still think people want to get the magazine, probably 80% of our people.

Steve: That's a similar response I've heard from like *New York State Conservationist*. People just enjoy getting the printed version. Tim, what aspects of your job as editor do you personally find most enjoyable?

Tim: You know, that's interesting, because I'm a person who in some ways could've become a scientist. I was working as a teenager helping with bird counts for the California Department of Fish and Game, like falcons, prairie falcons, peregrine falcons, things like that. I think the reason I didn't go that route was because I really didn't like the type of writing that was in technical journals. You know, really dry kind of writing. That's not the way I felt about these animals I was studying. So I got into journalism, got a magazine journalism degree, then a Master's degree in English. I still like the scientific life, and I started traveling with scientists and working with them, going on expeditions, which I still do. That's what I really love the best about my work. I've done stuff like gone to Greenland a couple of times on expeditions in an open boat up the coast looking at Gyrfalcon nests and Dovekie colonies and things like that. I've gone across Iceland and northern Alaska and Africa. I've gotten to spend time with people who are really passionate about their work and the animals they're studying. I get right into it. I'm a good field worker, a good field biologist. So I get to do that, but unlike people like that who will spend 30 years studying one species, I get to do it for three weeks, then come back and write about it, and then do something else next time. I have a lot interests in my life, and it makes it a rich experience for me.

Steve: What parts of the job are most challenging?

Tim: Oh, you know, I'm probably not the type who likes to work on budgets and things like that, and to have meetings. I don't like to have lots of meetings. Even just being in an office like I am a lot of times is not the kind of thing I love to do. Although my office, I have a beautiful view of the woods outside with nice autumn leaves. That's nice. I can duck out and go hiking through the woods and go bird watching. I like the more outdoor things, basically, compared to being in an office. Which of course, being an editor, that's part of my job, being in an office supervising people and doing budgets.

Steve: Sure. Is keeping it on track, on schedule, a major challenge? *Living Bird* is quarterly, correct?

Tim: Yes.

Steve: Is that tough to get it out every quarter?

Tim: No, not really. You get a rhythm to it. I've worked for a monthly magazine, I've worked for a daily newspaper. So it's not like deadlines—I don't have a problem with deadlines. I sort of just kind of intuitively know when things need to be done. I don't put myself through a rigid schedule, it's more intuitive.

Steve: Do you recruit the writers for the article primarily, or do you get a significant number of articles that are just sent in over the transom, that just come to you? What's the mix there?

Tim: I do it every which way. I'll get an idea, or I'll see something, for instance I might see someone give a talk, and think that it will be a really good article. Or someone might do a scientific paper and I think that'd be good. If I don't think that scientist can write it for a popular audience himself, I might think of someone else who could write that. I get a lot over the transom, but they're not always . . . you get a lot that aren't as good, a lot of chaff there. I write quite a few myself. I'll get other people around the Lab to write some sometimes. I give a number of freelance writers whose work I really like assignments. I call them up out of the blue sometimes and ask what they think about writing on a topic.

Steve: Tim, the summer 2005 issue of *Living Bird* includes the story of the rediscovery of the ivory-billed woodpecker, which of course you played a major role in. You wrote a book about the rediscovery, *The Grail Bird*. What messages would you like people to take away from your experience with the ivory-billed woodpecker?

Tim: Partly not to give up. There's been a tendency, you know people in 1910 were saying the ivory bill is probably extinct. Yet people would run across them. When I started working on that book I went around and interviewed people. I started with people who'd seen them in the 1930's and early 1940's in the old Singer Tract. But I also found many people much later, hunters and fishermen who said they'd seen them and had good descriptions and seemed to be honest. So I tried to keep an open mind and really listen to what they were saying and check it out and go to the places where they said they saw birds. That's what led to that sighting. I found one person who had a good description from just 6 days earlier. At this point I don't know. We're still searching for some of these birds that are nesting, and we haven't been able to find a nest yet, or even a reliable bird that you can always find in a certain place. We have a lot of sightings for a month or two after we had that sighting in 2004, but it's sort of, there's not much going on in Arkansas right now, and we've moved to other places. But I'd say the lesson is just to not give up, and also the importance of saving habitats.

Steve: That's what I wanted to ask about. I don't think everybody who might be listening to this program is aware of what the habitat is. Can you describe for us what the habitat was, and what's happened to it?

Tim: It was bottom land swamp forest with huge cypress trees, and really wild country. At the end of the Civil War, this kind of country was all across the river drainages of the southern United States, filled with wolves, panthers, bears, and just an amazing, amazing place. Then a lot of northern companies came in after the war and would buy up the logging rights and just started cutting those trees down and shipping the wood back up to rebuild Chicago after the fire and places like that. They just devastated that whole habitat. In the 1930's when they found the trees in the Singer Tract, which was an 81,000 acre tract of virgin timber in northeast Louisiana. It have Ivory Bills, and more wolves than anywhere in the lower 48 states, just an amazing place. There was a huge fight trying to save it, but a logging company cut it down in the early 1940's. That was the last really huge chunk of that kind of habitat left, and now it's starting to grow up again. There are places that haven't been cut in over a hundred years. Of course it will take 400 or 500 years for it to look like it did when it was virgin timber. We've got to start moving in that direction. We've got to save a lot of that habitat and not let special places like that disappear. We should have learned our lesson by now.

Steve: Are things better now, are you encouraged, in terms of saving really precious resources?

Tim: Well yeah, you know in the 1940's there weren't any environmental laws. Franklin Roosevelt didn't want the Singer Tract to get cut down, but he didn't have any law he could point to to put a stop to it. The governors of four states put up money trying to buy the logging rights so the trees wouldn't be cut. But it happened anyway. Now we do have strong laws. Although people keep tampering with the Endangered Species Act and trying to weaken it, it's still pretty strong. So I'm more hopeful. Actually the habitat in the southern swamps is much better than it was in the 1950's when was at about its worst condition, since so much of it had been clear cut. Now it's really growing back a lot. I'm hoping that we won't just get into another wave of cutting as it matures.

Steve: Tim, is there anything we haven't addressed in our interview that you'd like to tell our listeners?

Tim: Just that the life of a journalist or a magazine editor is a good career. It's been good for me, I've enjoyed it and I've done a lot interesting things, traveled all over the world. I'd recommend it.

Steve: Very good. Well Tim Gallagher, thank you very much for being my guest.

Tim: Thanks, my pleasure.

Steve: Memberships to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology start at \$40 and include *Living Bird*. To subscribe, visit www.livingbird.org. Thank you for listening to Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

26: *Mother Earth News*

Interview with publisher and editorial director Bryan Welch, October, 2008

My guest today is Bryan Welch, publisher and editorial director of *Mother Earth News*, “the original guide to living wisely.” This bi-monthly glossy magazine has been in publication since 1970, predating by a few decades today’s trendy interest in green living. Topics in the magazine focus on do-it-yourself ways to live in self-sufficient and ecologically conscious ways.

Ownership of *Mother Earth News* has changed several times in the last few decades. Its parent is now Ogden Publications of Topeka, Kansas, which produces 13 magazines including *Utne Reader*, *Grit*, and *Herb Companion*. In addition to guiding *Mother Earth News* and the other magazines, publisher Bryan Welch owns and operates a 50-acre farm of free range cattle, sheep, goats, and chickens.

Steve: Bryan, welcome to Periodical Radio.

Bryan: Thank you.

Steve: Issues of *Mother Earth News* carry a logo of a tree and the motto “More than a magazine . . . a way of life.” What is that way of life?

Bryan: It’s a way of life that holds as one of its central beliefs that our quality of life is contingent upon conscience, on a sense of responsibility, and that we can’t live as fulfilling a life if we don’t feel good about our impact on the environment and on the people around us. *Mother Earth News* has always had in its background this often unspoken theme that it’s absolutely imperative to a high quality life that we are working towards good outcomes and behaving in a responsible way vis-à-vis society and the planet.

Steve: The first issue of *Mother Earth News* was published by John and Jane Shuttleworth in January, 1970, three months before the first Earth Day. Do you think that timing was just a coincidence?

Bryan: Well not just a coincidence. They I don’t think were trying to hang any sort of marketing mission on Earth Day, but the movement, as it were, back then we talked about “the movement” all the time. The movement was gaining a ton of momentum at that time. We as young people in 1970 felt that humanity was finally waking up to its responsibilities, and that within a few years everyone would have formed a consensus about living in an environmentally responsible way. That’s not how it turned out in 1970, but that was the feeling. It allowed both Earth Day and *Mother Earth News* to get a lot of attention and expand very rapidly through the first few years of their existence.

Steve: Magazines have to change over time to attract readers, but sometimes loyal readers can become upset if a magazine goes through a redesign or might shift its focus. How has *Mother Earth News* changed over the years, and how has it stayed the same?

Bryan: Well, when it was started, I would say that *Mother Earth News* was a more subversive publication than it is today. In the early years, it was explicitly about overturning a lot of social norms. It's not really about that any more, and there's not a particularly large audience interested in that these days. The ethics, the morality, and the moray of *Mother Earth News* today are much more implicit. It's less about overturning anything than it is about inspiring change from within society. I think that simply reflects the tactics and attitudes of our readers and how they've changed over the years.

Steve: In the current issue (Oct./Nov. 2008), the magazine includes a letter to the editor that's kind of an angry letter that complained about the magazine being run by women who don't farm and are pushing a "liberal/enviro agenda." Why did you publish that letter?

Bryan: Well, (chuckles), you know, we debated that, whether to publish that letter or not. I think we published it to illustrate the different attitudes that come to the table. We speak to people often who to subscribe to *Mother Earth News* because they are interested in living a self-reliant life, principally, and a conscientious life, secondarily. This is an extreme case of someone like that. But we always find it illuminating to realize the different kinds of value people find in the magazine. We thought the letter gave one person's perspective on what we do, and we thought it would be interesting to see how that perspective illuminated the perspectives of others. In other words, we assumed that we will get reactions to that letter, and we have from people who felt very differently about who we are and what we do.

Steve: So the next issue will give some rebuttal letters.

Bryan: It will, yeah. The guy's assumptions were wrong. I'm obviously not a woman, and I do farm. The editor-in-chief is a woman, but she also lives on a farm and raises most of her own food. We're quite diverse, and we are still personally very involved in this sort of self-reliant lifestyle that's always epitomized *Mother Earth News*' audience. His assumptions were wrong, but we thought it was interesting that he would jump to those conclusions, and interesting find out what other people thought.

Steve: How important is it in general for the mission and the purpose of the magazine is reader feedback?

Bryan: Magazines today, the core of a magazine's business mission today is in most cases community building. Our real job is to create communities of interest around the content. A big part of that community interest, or that community formation, is a two-

way communication channel in which they're communicating with us and we're communicating back to them. Today it's far more important than ever before, because we're able to communicate instantaneously with many, many more people than we ever could before. So on our web sites, in our newsletters, on our forums, every day there are thousands of exchanges of information. *Mother Earth News* has almost a million unique visitors at its web site every month. We also survey several times a week some of our readers, asking them questions about what we should put on the cover, which sections of the magazine they liked and didn't like, and a variety of other things, trying to hone the magazine's mission. So interaction is right at the core of our tactics, it's one of our most important techniques for making the magazine successful in every way we can.

Steve: So the web really supports the magazine, and I'm sure it's a two-way street. Do you see the print magazine continuing into the foreseeable future? Do you ever see the web site replacing the print?

Bryan: That's impossible--I wouldn't even begin to speculate as to whether the web site or a digital product will ever replace the print product. But we know today that people want the print product. I often say to people that there's a *Wired* magazine, and it's very successful. It's made out of paper and it's extremely thick with both stories and advertising. *Wired* will be the first magazine to cease existence in print, because its readers are the most digitally friendly readers in the world. We will not be the first magazine to stop printing on paper. It seems at least this year that we are very far from ever having a paperless magazine industry. *Mother Earth News*' print circulation is growing steadily. I think when we acquired the magazine the print circulation was right around 300,000, and I believe the current issue will sell 440,000 copies, in addition to the million or so people, or two million people who will visit the web site during the two month circulation period. They're additive so far, and the web does support the print product in a very important way. The print product of course does drive people to the web site, as well, but it's really one community of interest served through various media, and the internet has been very beneficial to us so far.

Steve: I want to ask an internet related question that's sort of a librarian question. *Mother Earth News* is available in full text databases like those offered by EBSCO and ProQuest. What's your motivation for licensing the content so that students at universities and students in high schools and whatever can go in look at articles from *Mother Earth News* from one of these databases without having to buy the magazine?

Bryan: You know, nobody ever bought a magazine like *Mother Earth News* because they had to have it for a research project, or almost no one ever did. They buy the magazine for some kind of pleasurable experience that they acquire by sitting down with the magazine and spending time with it. Our web site as well has all of our archives going back to 1970, all available completely for free, searchable in a number of different ways.

So we're quite happy to provide this important information to anyone who wants it in as user-friendly a manner as we can. We do so because we think the information is important, but also because it builds our brand as a credible and trusted source of this kind of information. It's that reputation, it's that relationship, that our business is based on, not the existence of one story or another somewhere in the archive available to people who have to go in there and pay for it. That's just not how the business works. So anything that puts our name out there and this important information out there is in the end probably beneficial to us.

Steve: And clearly from what you were saying before, you've not seen any negative impact on subscriptions.

Bryan: Certainly not.

Steve: My understanding of those license agreements is that it brings a very modest amount of income to your company. Is that correct?

Bryan: Yes.

Steve: Okay. Publishers are generally unwilling to talk about that, so I'm certainly not going to ask you a dollar figure, but I wanted to confirm it's not a major source of revenue relative to the other parts of your business, it's pretty insignificant.

Bryan: It's very insignificant, it doesn't amount to a hill of beans.

Steve: I want to go back to the editing part of *Mother Earth News*. I've heard it argued that good editing is a craft that's pretty independent of what the topic area is. So going back to that letter to the editor criticizing the point of view of members of the editorial staff not being farmers, if the editing craft is separate from the topic area, it really wouldn't matter whether your editors farm or not, it really just matters whether they edit well. What's your take on that?

Bryan: My take is that whoever said that editing is a craft unrelated to the subject matter was wrong. The editor's job is to understand intuitively as well as trusting the data, of course. They have an intuitive understanding of what matters to our community of readers. That intuitive understanding I suppose can be acquired over years and years of listening to the readers, even if you're not personally interested in the subject matter. It's far more quickly acquired if you're the sort of person who would be a reader of the magazine, anyway, even if you weren't an editor at the magazine. I think it's very important that editors know about and care about the subject matter of the magazine. I don't think the editing craft is independent of the subject matter, by any means.

Steve: So when you look for editors for the Ogden Publications journals, that's definitely something you're looking for—some personal background.

Bryan: Yes, no question, they need to get it. They need to understand what motivates the reader, what excites the reader, what inspires the reader. All that needs to be, to some extent or another, intuitive.

Steve: Themes of sustainability and green living are all the rage now. I can't pick up a magazine without seeing the word "green" on the cover. Does the current trend help or hurt your position in the magazine market?

Bryan: I think it helps us. In the early stages of interest in any subject matter like this, for a little while the public tends to think this is a simple little puzzle we're going to solve quickly. As the reality of the situation sets in, they develop a keener and keener appetite for credible and highly expert sources of information, people they can trust to give them reliable information. That places a higher and higher premium on magazines like ours that have a long history of looking at these issues and are steeped in a deep understanding of the subject matter. So far it has added to our value significantly. I think it will continue to do so. I expect that our trusted voices will be more and more valuable to the audience as times goes by.

Steve: Bryan, who are your writers? I'll be a little more specific. What's the mix of content written by your editorial staff or work for hire that you recruit writers for, and articles and article ideas that just come in over the transom?

Bryan: Well, first of all, 80-90% of the articles are written by freelancers who are not our employees. I would say two thirds of those originate as a concept within our organization among the editors and are assigned to freelancers. About a third of them come in as ideas generated by writers or readers who just stumbled across something they wanted to communicate.

Steve: I see, okay. Bryan, what are the greatest pleasures of being editorial director of *Mother Earth News*, for you personally. What do you like best about it?

Bryan: I've had the very great privilege of living a life in which I don't have to weigh out my professional commitment against my personal commitments. The best thing about it is that what I'm passionate about is my career, and my business is focused on the same concerns and issues that I would focus on if I were a plumber or if I did something entirely different for a living. But it allows me to . . .you know, I just never have to think "Oh, this job is preventing me from doing what I want to do," because this job requires me to do exactly what I want to do (laughs). That's a really lucky thing, to have a job like that.

Steve: So there's a real synergy—you have a farm of your own, correct?

Bryan: I do.

Steve: So you see a strong synergy between editorially directing *Mother Earth News* and running your farm.

Bryan: Yeah, well, I'm a farmer, I'm an environmentalist. I care very deeply about storytelling. I think first and foremost I was a storyteller. I loved the act of communicating through the written word. The magazines we've built this business around reflect my own value system. It's a really privileged position for me to fill, and I feel deeply fortunate.

Steve: You know, it's wonderful to feel that positively towards one's work, it's really great. But in that context, there must be some challenges. What are the greatest challenges of running the magazine?

Bryan: Um, well, any competitive business is challenging. It's challenging to communicate first of all strategically; to utilize our resources in the most efficient way possible is a very interesting and challenging puzzle every day. To motivate my colleagues to devote their energies and apply them in the right ways is challenging. I don't know, it's challenging every way running any business is challenging, I suppose. I suppose one of the other challenges in doing what I do, is when is enough enough? Balancing reflection and rest and enjoyment against the urgency of our mission is on a personal level interesting and challenging. One could wear oneself thin if we let ourself. That would be a big mistake, of course, because it would undermine our ability to do our jobs very effectively.

Steve: Of all of the magazine and journal editors with whom we've addressed the topic of keeping on schedule, there have been differing opinions. Some feel a great deal of pressure of having to keep the magazine on schedule. I had an interview with an editor yesterday who said oh, no, it's not that much of a problem, we're in a groove, it just kind of happens. So I think what I'm hearing you say is there's a balance there. You do have a magazine that needs to go out on time, but you try not to beat yourselves up over that.

Bryan: I don't know, I think when we have eight magazines, they all have to be out on time.

Steve: Right.

Bryan: But that's a little bit like riding a motorcycle staying upright. Hitting the deadlines is Publishing 101. I would have to say that anybody who considers that their biggest challenge is still kind of an amateur.

Steve: Um-hm.

Bryan: That's a pretty fundamental part of doing what we do. That doesn't really come up.

Steve: Well one of the things that comes up, particularly with scholarly journals, not the leading ones but--you said amateur--there's a certain tier of publications where they struggle a little bit. They don't have a really have a solid market position like your magazines do, and one of their problems is lack of content. They have to scurry around to gather content. I gather that's not an issue for you at all.

Bryan: Well that's another part of the machine that has to run smoothly. I was in the newspaper business for 20 years. You take hitting the deadlines more or less for granted. You know you have to be set up to do that, first. There are other industries where if a project becomes complex and things don't go exactly as planned, you just move the deadline. In fact, that's how most human endeavors work. But publishing is an endeavor that doesn't work that way. I think any experienced person in this industry becomes accustomed to cutting whatever corners need to be cut so that you make the deadline. It's just like breathing in and breathing out for us.

Steve: And the cows have to be milked on time, right?

Bryan: Absolutely.

Steve: Kind of the same concept.

Bryan: Right.

Steve: I've read some pretty dire predictions of the magazine industry in general. It sounds to me like you're doing well, and that you've got a formula that works. Do you have any thoughts or feelings about the magazine industry as a whole, as a healthy business?

Bryan: Well there's more than one magazine industry. The magazine industry that was about mass market magazines supported by big consumer advertisers is in a lot of trouble. Over time it had come to rely on some distorted versions of reality in which there were many not entirely credible ways of building circulation. There were very questionable manners of measuring audience, and now those are being called into question as new competition arises on the internet. In special interest magazines like ours, we've always been reliant on profits generated by circulation. The big consumer magazines are not. They lose a lot of money in circulation and make it back by selling advertising. On our side of the industry, the special interest magazine side of the industry, the internet has given us a lot of great new tools for building audience, and we make money from our audience. In the industry that's dependent on advertising and loses money in circulation, well, much of the supporting structure of that industry is suffering from some degree of rot. It's going to need a pretty significant reorganization if it's going to survive.

Steve: So would it be a reasonable generalization that those magazines that build and sustain a community will survive, and those that will not may not survive?

Bryan: Well they all have to be run well, but as a generalization I think that those who have successfully built a community with a high degree of affinity for the magazine and its voice will do well if they're able to utilize the new technology and the new media effectively.

Steve: Would you recommend a career in magazines to today's college students?

Bryan: It depends on the student. If you love community building and you love storytelling, I'd absolutely recommend it. Nothing's more fun. If want to get really rich really fast, no, I wouldn't recommend it. It's not a good way to do that.

Steve: That's fair enough.

Bryan: (laughs)

Steve: Bryan, in conclusion, what would you like our listeners to know about *Mother Earth News* that we haven't discussed yet?

Bryan: *Mother Earth News* is all about the joy of living a conscientious life. It's a very practical guide to living that life, with lots of hands-on instruction and very practical and sometimes vaguely humorous basic skills, you know, milking goats and mucking out the stalls and whatnot. But at the heart of it all it's more about spirituality than anything, and about the ways that conscientiousness and doing the right thing can ennoble a human life, and make it more fulfilling.

Steve: Well Bryan Welch, thank you very much for speaking with me and being my guest on Periodical Radio. I really appreciate it.

Bryan: It was my pleasure.

Steve: Subscriptions to *Mother Earth News* are \$12.95. Their web site at www.MotherEarthNews.com includes Bryan Welch's blog and a wide variety of information that supplements the magazine. Thank you for listening to Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

27: *Home Power*

Interview with Ian Woofenden, Senior Editor, October 2008

The topic of this program is *Home Power*, a bi-monthly magazine about small-scale renewable energy production. Articles address in detail how to design, build, and install small scale wind, solar, and hydroelectric systems. My guest is Ian Woofenden, one of two Senior Editors at *Home Power*.

Steve: Ian, welcome to Periodical Radio.

Ian: Thank you.

Steve: *Home Power* began in 1987. Please tell us the story of how the magazine got started, and what its mission is.

Ian: Richard and Karen Perez started *Home Power*. They had moved off grid in the 1970's, and lived with candles and kerosene, but wanted electricity for their Grateful Dead tapes and lighting. Richard was a technical person and started looking into photovoltaics when it was just emerging on the market. He started a business helping his off grid neighbors get solar electricity, and then realized there was a real need for a publication for the beginning industry.

Steve: So the mission was to reach people who were interested primarily in living off the grid at that time?

Ian: At that time, that was the market. The way our mission is stated now is to change the way the world makes and uses electricity. That certainly became a growing focus for the Perezes and the rest of the magazine crew as the market shifted from off grid users to more on grid users.

Steve: How did you become involved with *Home Energy*?

Ian: Um, with *Home Power* magazine?

Steve: Yes, I'm sorry, that's what I meant to say.

Ian: There is another publication out there called *Home Energy*.

Steve: Sorry about that.

Ian: A good publication, as well. I moved off grid in the early 1980's, and was on the original free mailing list for *Home Power*, so I'm a charter subscriber. It's always been my favorite magazine. In the mid 1990's I became interested in working in the industry. I went to Solar Energy International workshops, and I met the Perezes and was hired as one of the early editors.

Steve: That was in the mid-1990's, you said?

Ian: Actually I was hired in 1998, so 10 years ago.

Steve: At that time you had a background of living off grid yourself, and had built a fair amount of expertise, correct?

Ian: Yes, I've been living off grid since 1981, to be exact, and had already started coordinating workshops on renewable energy technologies.

Steve: For listeners who may be unfamiliar with the magazine, can you briefly discuss the types of systems addressed in *Home Power*?

Ian: We focus on renewable energy technologies. We're dealing with solar energy systems, both solar electric and solar hot water, wind electric, small hydroelectric systems. We deal with natural home building and building science, looking at insulation and building envelope issues. We deal with alternative transportation issues, and a few odds and ends on parallel topics such as methane systems and that sort of thing. So renewable energy is our focus, and practical information on home scale systems is what we report on.

Steve: What are some of the advantages to homeowners of producing their own power?

Ian: Many, and it really depends on their motivations, what they see as advantages. I would say the primary motivations are environmental, reliability, cost, and then there's the whole class of people who just think it's cool. So the advantages on the environmental end are that this is clean energy. With any other energy source we're dealing with a fuel that has a limited availability, and also has an impact on the environment. When you're talking about renewables, as Richard Perez likes to say, "free fuel delivered daily." The sun rises every morning and causes the cycle that gives us winds and hydroelectric potential. We can tap that. From a dependability basis, some people like the dependability or the independence of renewable energy. Most of us aren't capable of running own nuke or coal plant, but we can actually invest in these technologies and implement them on the home scale and take care of our own needs right on site. And then again, there's this whole class of people who like tinkering with the technology, which is where *Home Power*'s roots are. But I'd say today our main audience is people who are going to purchase a system and have it installed. I would say the primary motivations these days are environmental, reliability and then cost. Cost is a tough one, because we're competing with a very heavily subsidized energy system. But more and more as energy prices rise and as incentive programs appear and as the technology itself becomes more mass market and therefore less expensive, the cost motivation and benefit is coming more clearly into the picture.

Steve: I understand that the systems can be both tied to the grid or off grid. I'd like to ask a question about living off grid. If someone chooses to do that, what sacrifices or tradeoffs do they have to make?

Ian: Big ones. I'm a good person to ask, since I've lived off grid since the 1980's and I speak to people on the topic very frequently. There's a little terminology confusion. Some people say "Hey, I want to go off grid." What they really mean is they want to use renewable energy technologies. As a consultant, and as an editor and as an author, I will never advise, or almost never advise someone to go off grid if the grid is easily available, because the grid is a very useful tool. You asked about sacrifices. What you sacrifice when you go off grid is the capacity of the grid, so you can always plug in whatever you want. To try to replace that instant access to whatever level of energy you want, you need to have batteries and a generator. Batteries and generators are the most problematic parts of these systems. They're costly, they're high maintenance, and they reduce the efficiency as well as the environmental friendliness of these systems. As an almost 30 year user of batteries and generators, I tell our readers and my private clients, if you can avoid those two things by connecting to the grid, do it.

Steve: So in most cases it's easier to use renewable energy at the home level to supplement what one gets from the grid?

Ian: Well it's easier to use it in parallel with the grid. I would say the only drawback of renewable resources is that they are variable. If we only want to use electricity when the sun is shining and the wind is blowing, everything's hunky-dory. But when it's overcast and/or calm, or the creek dries up and we want to use energy, we need some backup. This variability can be across the whole year in the case of a seasonal hydro stream, or the fact that it's cloudier in the winter. But it's also a daily variability, and we typically want lights at night, and the sun always shines in the day, never at night. So off grid you need to bridge that variability by putting batteries in the system, and you need to cover the backup by having a generator. On grid, you can use the grid itself conceptually as a big battery. Forty some states have net metering laws that require utilities to accept our renewable energy and credit us for every kilowatt hour. So if a renewable energy system is creating more than it's using during the day, that surplus is sold back to the grid, conceptually spinning your meter backwards, and you create a credit that you can use that night or that winter if you build up a surplus over the summer. It's avoiding the two most difficult parts of off grid systems, and allowing you to in the short term share your surplus energy with the grid, and over the longer term use that credit up. So it's not necessarily just supplemental, you can install a system that makes all of the energy you use, but it doesn't make it at exactly the time you're using it.

Steve: Ian, in the current (Oct./Nov. 2008) issue of *Home Power*, you make the point that “the true value of renewable energy cannot be measured by dollars alone.” To properly value renewable energy, what factors should we consider?

Ian: That’s a very good question, and I think it’s very individual. I think unfortunately energy has been singled out as a commodity that we look at primarily in financial terms. Part of my point in my editorial you’re referring to is that we look at hardly anything else in solely that way. We don’t look at our clothing that way, and think “What’s the financial return of my clothing?” We don’t look at our transportation, our furniture, our entertainment, our food that way. We have a wide variety of different values for different people. If we look at the issue of food only from the standpoint of the economics, we wouldn’t worry about taste, and we would perhaps worry not so much about health, although if we looked long term we would think about health. We wouldn’t think about appearance, we’d just look at cost—just give me the cheapest food that will support me. We don’t look at most things that way. When we get to financial return, there are only two things I think of that we measure only with that measure, and that’s financial investments, and even those we have other values. We want socially acceptable investments. The other is our homes, which we look at how they increase in value, but obviously there are many other values we hold for homes. I think in energy in a way is an anomaly, and it’s unfortunate. I’m not sure how we got here, that we don’t question where it comes from and what its real cost to society is, and its real impact.

Steve: Let’s extend this with the issue of wind power on larger scales. I’m in upstate New York, and here and in many other places there’s talk of wind farms. They tend to be very controversial. I know wind power is an area of expertise for you. What’s your take on the opposition to wind farms, what would you have to say to those folks?

Ian: Good question. First of all, I have to say that *Home Power* covers the home scale renewable energy, and we only occasionally touch on utility scale, but as individuals on our crew, we all support large-scale renewables, because we realize that we need it on all scales. In answer to your question I’ll quote Tom Gray, who works for the American Wind Energy Association, or I’ll paraphrase him. A beautiful thought he had, he said when people object to wind farms, they typically compare them to nothing. Nothing has no impact, so it’s real easy to talk about the negative points of wind farms when we compare them to nothing. But if we compare them to what we’re trying to replace with them, how many people on Nantucket want a coal-fired plant, how many people want a nuclear plant there? So we need to make an apples-to-apples comparison. Everything we do here has an impact. There’s no free energy that has no impact. The point with renewables is we have much less impact. From a conceptual business standpoint, what other energy technology can you have that has a capital cost, a maintenance cost, but no fuel cost? If we were living in a marketplace that really was a level playing field, I’d think we’d find renewables would be a slam dunk, and people would more readily make

the real comparison if we put it right in front of them. Some people object to wind turbines on the ridges in the Adirondacks, but where is their electricity coming from? They're ripping off the ridges in Appalachia to make coal power, and putting it outside of their viewscape. So as soon as we start comparing apples to apples, large scale wind starts looking very good.

Steve: Let's bring the focus back to the home level, and the do-it-yourself factor. You mentioned already in the beginning days of the magazine, it was primarily geared toward the do-it-yourselfer. Do you have a sense today what the mix of readers is between those who are wanting to install systems themselves versus the readership that are folks who install systems as a business?

Ian: I have some figures in front of us from our operations director. They don't exactly address that, but 60% are urban/suburban, 90% of our readers connect to the utility grid, 63% have a gross household income over \$70,000, 68% have undergraduate degrees, 28% postgraduate degrees. There's some stereotyping here, but my read from both these statistics and my contact with our readers is a very large majority of our readers are probably not going to install their own systems these days. That's a huge switch from the early days of the magazine, when most of the readers were going to install their own systems.

Steve: What's changed over the years to make that shift?

Ian: Several things. I would say the cost of the systems has come down, therefore it's more affordable for people for these to be done professionally. I would say the size of the systems and the complexity has actually gone up in general. Because they're more affordable we're putting in larger systems. If you had a little cabin in the woods in the 1980's, you could buy one little module and one little battery and a few little lights, and that was something a hobbyist could handle. When you're putting a \$40,000 system on the roof of your house, maybe you're not so excited about taking the responsibility for learning how to design and specify and install that system well.

Steve: Is it a good growth area for jobs?

Ian: Absolutely, definitely. The industry in general is growing at the rate of 30+ percent a year. I suspect if we look at recent figures over the last 18 months, the rate would be even higher.

Steve: What are some of the more exciting developments in small scale energy production? What's going on right now with the technology or other things besides technology that are exciting?

Ian: You know, my answer to that question may not be satisfactory to you, but I think what's most exciting to me is people's acceptance of the technology, and people's understanding of it. I've been around this for two or three decades, and we hear a lot of hype over the years about what's coming next. But the reality is there hasn't been huge change, there's been gradual improvement. There haven't been any dramatic breakthroughs, I would say. What I'm most excited about is people understand that this technology works, specifically about photovoltaics, that it's an incredible technology. It's hard to really make an analogy to or compare to. I tried to make an analogy in the editorial you referred to. With photovoltaics we have the merging of two things that we don't see anywhere else in our life. One is something that's very long lasting, a product with a 25 year warranty, a 40-50 year life. That's amazing in itself. We're hard pressed to find something else to point to to compare that to. The other is it's something that's productive. Most everything else we buy takes maintenance and is essentially a financial loss, where as all the renewable energy technologies are productive. So you put these two things together and you have something pretty amazing. So I get a little impatient, skeptical when I hear about new developments, because what we have, I'd say the general public is just starting to see how remarkable it is, how exciting it is, what we have specifically in photovoltaics. Other things I would say are positive and exciting are the way systems are being integrated and simplified. When I first started, my home system looked like a hodge-podge of gray and green and red and black boxes on the wall hooked up in my case with a rat's nest of wires. Now we can buy a system that's prewired, we can install it very quickly, it's professional and safe and code compliant. Especially with the batteryless systems with grid tie, they're extremely simple. Our participants in the workshops I coordinate are routinely surprised at how simple it is, how advanced the technology is, and how much the companies involved are pulling their products together into packages.

Steve: Well Ian that was a fine answer. I'd like to shift focus a little bit now and ask a couple of questions about running the magazine itself. A lot of magazines I observe as a librarian either get gobbled by big publishers or they split up into a whole bunch of little niche titles, like in your case it might be one just for solar, just for wind, just for professionals. But *Home Power* has been really very stable that way. Has it been a challenge to stay the course?

Ian: I think it has been a little bit of a challenge, but there's something different about this magazine in that there is a real mission that starts right at the ownership, right at the Perezes. Their whole purpose in life in the last 30 years has been promoting renewable energy. They're not in it for the money. It's been successful for them, but that's not their motivation. They're in it to promote something they're passionate about. And that's really true of everyone who works for the magazine. Many of us could make more money in other places in the publishing industry, but we're passionate about what we do and

excited to work with something we're passionate about. There's been chatter over the years about larger companies making offers to buy the magazine, and that has been resisted at every turn. That would not be compatible with our mission. We've seen other magazines take on our topic area and water it down. That's not something any of us want to see happen. As far as the niches, I don't know if you're aware that we just actually did just bring out a second title, which is a big step for us.

Steve: I wasn't aware of that.

Ian: *Solar Professional* has its debut issue, you can go to solarprofessional.com. It is a trade magazine, free to the trade, supported solely by advertising. This is a big step for us, and I think it's a great step for the industry, and it's a good step for *Home Power*, because we've had this struggle over the years between our various audiences. We've talked about off grid and on grid, but we've also had this group who are professionals in the industry who use *Home Power* as a source of information, and we try to serve them. Then we have this large group of people who are not professionals, who are homeowners. A very large percentage of our readership picks up *Home Power* off the newsstand, a single issue here and there. That's a very different audience from the professional installers. It's great for us editorially, that now we can focus more directly. It is separate editorial crews and one can focus on that installer market and the other on the homeowner.

Steve: What about the title? Have there been temptations over the years to change the title to better reflect the full scope of the magazine?

Ian: It's been discussed, let's say. The avenues we've taken to address the concerns have been to add more cover text, to define our mission more, so you'll see at the top "solar, wind, water, design, build." So use of other elements on the cover has been our answer to the concerns that "Home Power" perhaps doesn't say everything we want to say.

Steve: Well I'd like to thank you on behalf of all librarians for having that point of view, because we dislike title changes for a number of reasons. It confuses people. The advertising in *Home Power* is closely linked to the topics. Do you have a policy for what kind of ads you'll take, or is there just a natural synergy between the readership and the advertisers?

Ian: I think it's the latter. We don't rule out an advertisement if it's not exactly on topic. But we're a small niche market. At times we'd like to woo some larger advertisers. We'd like to see a Toyota Prius ad in our magazine. But it's difficult for a company of that size to justify advertising in a very small publication like ours, relatively small. I'm not on the advertising side, so I can't give you a definitive answer, but I would say there's a natural synergy and the people who are served by advertising in our magazine are the people who stick with us.

Steve: Like most magazines, *Home Power* has an extensive web site filled with useful information. How has having a web site changed the business of having a magazine?

Ian: I have a great quote here from our operations director, Scott Russell. I'll actually read you the whole paragraph here: "*Home Power's* paid circulation still overwhelmingly dominated by print editions. As such, the web site has been designed as a research archive for our readers. *Home Power* articles frequently reference previously published material and the web site's article search and filtering functionality enables readers to easily locate and download those items. Our content has excellent shelf life, and the web site provides that shelf space so our readers don't have to." I think Scott says it there. They're compatible, they're synergistic, and they're able to support each other. Most people still read the print edition, primarily, although we have a certain number of readers who say "I don't want paper, I just want to do it all electronically." Our online membership allows you to have both at a reasonable price and reference that 20+ year history of articles, many of which are still very relevant. Another little statistic Scott tossed out here is 84% of our readership keeps every copy indefinitely for reference. I know I'm looking at 20+ years on my shelf here in my office. It's surprising how many people who are our readers over the years have that sort of collection. It isn't just librarians who like to keep things.

Steve: Right. I've found that to be a typical characteristic of magazines that have a lot of how-to information.

Ian: Um-hm.

Steve: A while back I interviewed the editor of *WoodenBoat* magazine, and then there's *Fine Woodworking*, and magazines like that. Those types with the how-to information really do have very long shelf lives. So Ian, is there anything else you'd like my listeners to know about *Home Power* we haven't discussed?

Ian: I guess I'd be remiss if I didn't say "homepower.com" at least 17 times in our conversation (laughs). But, no. I'd like to say that this is a magazine that's driven by passion from the ownership all the way down to the editorial crew and the rest of our crew. We're excited about what we do, we're excited about sharing, and we live with these technologies. We're not writing about these technologies as outsiders, and indeed that goes down to our authors. Many of our articles are written by the end users themselves, or the installers, not paid reporters who are writing about a topic they don't fully get. It comes through in the passion of the writers in the same way as the passion of our editors and staff writers. We're excited about the technology we're promoting and we're excited about making it more accessible to people and become more predominant in society so we can all use less nonrenewable energy and have a cleaner environment and a more reliable energy structure.

Steve: Well Ian, thank you very much for being my guest.

Ian: My pleasure.

Steve: Subscriptions to *Home Power* are \$24.95 a year. To subscribe, go to <http://www.homepower.com>. Thank you for listening to Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

28: *International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics*

Interview with editor Dr. Mary E. Rawlinson, December 2008

The topic of today's show is the *International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics*, a new semi-annual scholarly journal. Its interdisciplinary approach to ethical issues in the biological sciences draws from philosophy, public policy, and sociology, among other disciplines. The bioethical topics are addressed in readable articles likely to interest readers whether or not they embrace feminist perspectives.

To learn more about the journal and feminist approaches to bioethics, my guest is editor Mary C. Rawlinson, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Stony Brook.

Steve: Dr. Rawlinson, let's start with a big but basic question. What are feminist approaches to bioethics?

Dr. Rawlinson: I think that the basic idea that defines feminist approaches to bioethics is the idea that we need to take gender seriously from the beginning in thinking about health problems, or ethical issues related to health care. About ten years ago, I edited an issue for another journal on feminist bioethics when it was a relatively new field. One of the criticisms we got of the proposal was that of course feminist bioethics would only be interesting to women. That's really a mistaken idea, because taking gender seriously in thinking about health and health care means that we start from a different perspective, but one that is just as generally human as the male perspective, so that we can learn things that are universally applicable by starting from women's experience. I think we're at a point in ethics generally, particularly in bioethics, where the concepts that we inherit from the tradition of rights and the social contract and the law of property and so forth are proving inadequate to the ethical urgencies that we are facing. We might discover if we started from the difference of gender and took women's experience as something that was universally applicable, that we had a lot more resources than we might think in human experience to inform our ethical thinking. The field of feminist bioethics really gets established about 15 years ago with the establishment of the International Association of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics, which was established by Anne Donchin from Indiana University, her colleague Becky Holmes, and Rosie Tong who is a distinguished professor at the University of North Carolina. These women were part of a larger group working on the idea of relational autonomy. Standard ethics begins from the idea that we are individual subjects, individual agents, and we have to do a lot of logical work to figure out how we're connected and how our different interests are adjudicated. This group of mainly philosophers were beginning from the idea that what's primary in human experience are our relations. You can see how this would be a particularly feminist perspective. You might begin from the mother-child relationship, as a relationship that

can inform our ethical thinking. So it's around this work in relational autonomy that the field of feminist bioethics really gets established. Of course now it has reached into every area of bioethics, from focusing on very sophisticated issues related to developments in new technologies, perhaps around our reproduction, but not exclusively so, to very global issues related to health and justice. In fact our first issue was really focused on the necessity to rethink bioethics generally as a kind of public health ethics, really taking a global perspective that's somehow essential to bioethics. So I think feminist bioethics both contributes to ethical problems as they're currently formulated in bioethics, for example related to new technologies, but it's also challenging the very definition of bioethics, and calling for a kind of reconceptualization, in fact not only of bioethics, but of our basic ethical concepts and principles. As I say, that's really what the first issue is about.

Steve: In the inaugural issue, Susan Sherwin argues that bioethics is, or at least should be, public ethics. You just alluded to that. She includes an example that young women deciding to have breast enlargements and their doctors should be fully conscious of the social issues involved, and society as a whole should be more sensitive to the consequences of social pressures. Could you expand on that for us a little bit, and describe her argument and its importance?

Dr. Rawlinson: Again, I think Sue Sherwin there is reflecting an idea that is centrally important to feminist bioethics, namely the idea that you have to see particular ethical relationships within the larger social context. It's somewhat a Leibnizian principle, that everything is connected with everything else. I think too often in bioethics we focus for example on the doctor-patient relationship without seeing that in its larger social and institutional contexts. Dr. Sherwin's point there is it's very important with regard to issues of informed consent to make sure the patient understands not only very specific things about procedures, but also there's a larger context in which she's making a decision. Again, this reflects the general principle of feminist bioethics that our decisions, even our identities, are to a large extent socially constituted and socially located, and can only be understood within these larger social and institutional horizons.

Steve: Dr. Rawlinson, my understanding of feminism is very superficial, but I gather from your journal and other sources that feminism is far from monolithic. Can you sketch for us a few of the major perspectives within feminism?

Dr. Rawlinson: This is a very good question to ask in relationship to *IJFAB*, because I often describe this particular community of scholars--*IJFAB* is the official publication of the International Association of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics, which I alluded to earlier. I describe this particular scholarly community as relentlessly interdisciplinary, and within disciplines relentlessly diverse in its methodologies. Indeed I wanted to call the journal just "Feminist Bioethics." I thought for marketing purposes it would be much

more effective. But this community insisted on the title *International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics*, thus marking not only its relentlessly international commitment, but also its commitment to the idea that methodological diversity is necessary in ethics. This goes back to this idea of taking gender seriously. I think feminism is, in general, in all of its forms, committed to the idea that our ethical subjectivities are historically constituted and historically situated, and that we need many different stories about what it is to be an ethical subject in order to understand ourselves effectively in relationship to the ethical urgencies that confront us. We're not just abstract Kantian rational subjects, we're situated in lots of different infrastructures and in different historical contexts, and we're constituted by these, and reflect these. These need to be taken into account in our decision making. I'm not really talking about relativism here, because I think these different perspectives have their universal significance. That's what's important about taking gender into account. In terms of different methodologies, particularly within feminist bioethics, I think it's several different scholarly communities that are constituted more by the kinds of problems they focus on. For example, there's a whole community of people within the *IJFAB* community that work on reproductive technologies and issues related to them, whether it be in the clinic, or looking at ethical issues in research, as reflected in our second issue. This is a very diverse group in terms of their disciplines and their methodologies. You have philosophers who come from different traditions, you have sociologists working on these issues, you have physicians and other health care professionals working on these issues, anthropologists, historians. *FAB* and *IJFAB* provides the space for this kind of interdisciplinary conversation. Again, with everybody being sort of focused around the issue of how important it is to take gender into account from the very beginning when thinking about ethical issues in health care. You have another community within the larger *IJFAB* community that's focused around issues of health care and global justice. Someone like my book review editor Lisa Eckenweiler is writing on transnational issues in caregiving. Indeed our next issue, which is coming out this Spring, edited by Arleen Salles and Constance Perry is going to focus on transnational issues in health care. Lisa Eckenweiler for example is looking at the relationship between certain ways of organizing health care in the United States and the relation of these to immigration policies, and other facts of immigration, and what kinds of ethical issues arise in this context. Ruth Macklin from Yeshiva University, who just gave a talk for us in a conference at Stony Brook-Manhattan celebrating the journal, has been doing a lot of work on health disparities in women in developing countries, again looking at the relationship between gender and justice in a global context. So there's a whole scholarly community working on these issues, and they reflect not only disciplinary diversity, but real methodological diversity within disciplines. I'm a so-called Continental philosopher who reads Hegel and Derrida. Ruth Macklin is one of the most distinguished analytic philosophers in America, and yet *IJFAB* and *FAB* provides a space in which we have really meaningful exchanges around these issues. I think this is

typical of feminism in general, that it has really challenged a lot of the old disciplinary or methodological divisions, and provides a space that moves beyond that.

Steve: What was the impetus to create a journal?

Dr. Rawlinson: Well, as far as I can tell, this journal is a result of a conversation between Kate Caras, who is the head of journals at Indiana University Press, our publisher (I call her *mon ange* [“my angel”] because she seems to solve all problems that arise) and Hilda Lindeman, professor of philosophy at Michigan State University and a former editor of *Hypatia*, the most distinguished journal in feminism. She and Kate had been working together for about five years publishing *Hypatia*, and out of a conversation they were having came the idea of a journal in feminist bioethics. This field has really established itself now, and is taken into account in all major reviews of bioethics. So Hilda took this to the International Association of Feminist Bioethics. They established a journal committee to explore the idea that was headed by Francoise Baylis who holds a Canada Council Chair at Dalhousie University, and she explored with her committee various presses. Eventually they put out a call for proposals for an editor over the various bioethical and feminist networks, and there was a competitive process that went on I think for about eighteen months. In January 2007 they invited me to take on the editorship of the new journal, which at that point didn’t even have a name. They were still exploring the contract with Indiana University Press. That was signed later that Spring in 2007. We had our first what I call “proto-editorial board meeting” in March 2007, and our first issue “Doing Feminist Bioethics” appeared in Spring 2008. So that was about seventeen months from appointment to first issue, which believe me was a very wild ride.

Steve: Is the job of editor about what you expected it to be, or have you had some surprises along the way?

Dr. Rawlinson: I had absolutely no idea what I was getting into. I have done a great deal of editing. I’ve edited five issues of the *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, and several books, but this is quite different. This wasn’t taking on an already established journal, which I think would have been a new and challenging experience. We had to create the infrastructure from the ground up. I felt at one point that I was living with Kate Caras and the then directors of FAB, Wendy Rodgers at MacQuarrie University in Australia and Carolyn McLeod at Western Ontario in Canada. We were on e-mail constantly for weeks coming up with the name, the infrastructure, editorial board, policies, procedures. Everything had to be created *ex nihilo*. That was a really exciting process, to be able to actually establish the mission of the journal and embed and embody it in that infrastructure. To me, that’s what’s great about doing the job of editor. It’s a collaborative process, and I love that, getting together with people and working through problems and producing something. Certainly the first issue would never had appeared as

it did without the managing editors Brady Heiner and Chris Labarbera who were then graduate students at Stony Brook doing their doctoral studies. Chris now has an assistant professorship in New Hampshire and Brady's finishing his doctorate out in California. They were just amazing, both in terms of their creativity and in contributing to the process of setting up the journal, and in terms of their ability to meet the deadlines. We have a really fabulous copy editor in Leslie Rubin, who manages to correct all our mistakes before they go to the printer. The people at Indiana University Press, Kate Caras, the head of journals, Judith Calwell from production, and Linda Bannister in publicity are all just wonderful to work with. That was really what I was looking for in taking on this job. I've done administration in the past. I like these sort of special projects. I have to be very grateful to my president, Shirley Strum Kenney, and my Dean, James V. Staros who support the journal. They collaborate financially with Indiana University Press to make it possible. In terms of what I expected out of the journal on the positive side, this collaborative effort has been great. It's been wonderful to work with the board and the authors, the managing editors, the co-coordinators of FAB, to make something a reality that then turns out to be a real contribution to the scholarly community, and to advance the discourse, not only of feminism, but of bioethics generally. I think the response to our second issue particularly, the response to the first issue was great, the response to the second issue was really quite remarkable. Before it even came out in print we had a flurry of correspondence about one article in particular on the inclusion of pregnant women in research. Seeing those sorts of results and having the chance to collaborate with people in this productive way is what I find exciting about the project. It was a lot more work than I ever expected, and a lot more difficult than I ever expected. Though that's sort of an interesting intellectual challenge, as well, coming up with the physical infrastructures that will support this kind of publication. It's an interesting intellectual challenge that we're still honing.

Steve: Did your organization ever consider the option of publishing the journal online-only, and making it Open Access, where it's freely available to all, rather than going through the traditional subscription route?

Dr. Rawlinson: We did consider this briefly, and I think it was briefly for two reasons. First, we're very committed to using the journal to promote feminist scholarship in bioethics, and particularly the scholarship of junior people. Quite frankly, in academia today, at least our perception is that the Open Access journals do not command the same kind of respect in the tenure process that a traditional in-print journal does. It's also important that we're an international organization, and there are very, very different criteria. For example, even within the Anglophone countries, there are very different criteria and rating systems, and very different review processes between the United States and Australia, for example. So we felt that this combination of having the journal available online for relatively nominal fees was best. We really talked about the financial

threshold in terms of making the journal readily accessible to people and having traditional print was going to best serve our interest in promoting the scholarship of junior people. There is a second reason, which is perhaps more fervently held on my part than by most of colleagues, because I work on the philosophy of literature. I think it's very important to have an in-print copy of the journal, because I think you experience a book quite differently than you do online content. There was just recently an article in the Sunday *New York Times* about the longevity and the perhaps near immortality of the book, and how it would not be put out of its misery by online content, wouldn't be put out of existence by online content. If we had time to do a phenomenology of reading here, I think I could convince you.

Steve: Well, I'm a librarian, so I'm a pretty easy sell.

Dr. Rawlinson: Okay, very good. There's something about the browsability, the portability of it, the way you can share it, that I think is very important. So that was a second reason, perhaps as I say more important to me than some of my colleagues.

Steve: Indeed, although several of the editors I've interviewed over the last few years have had a very similar perspective as yours.

Dr. Rawlinson: Well, there is a whole body of literature that I think demonstrates this very clearly. I've written on this myself, in terms of my work on Proust and Derrida, on the importance of reading as a physical and an emotional and intellectual practice. What you do online, looking at the screen is not like reading a book, for all kinds of phenomenological reasons. So I think it's a really interesting philosophical point that's actually supported by a large body of literature.

Steve: You said that feminist to bioethics has become fairly well established, but relatively recently. You also talked about it being a very international audience and authorships, with many methodologies. With it being so diverse, do you have difficulty recruiting qualified peer reviewers?

Dr. Rawlinson: Well, this is where the connection to FAB is so important. The journal grew out of the International Association of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics, which is a sister organization to the International Association of Bioethics, which meets every two years in a variety of international locations. We just had our most recent meeting this September in Croatia. This gives us a sort of ready-made population to begin with, and we have lots of productive collaborations here. In fact, we have two colleagues, Angus Dawson and Marcel Verweij who are the editors of *Public Health and Ethics*, published by Oxford University Press, who call their journal our sister journal, and always promote us. So we always promote them. They're doing really wonderful work, very closely related to the kind of work we're doing in *IJFAB*. So there was a ready-made FAB network, listserv, a ready-made IAB network. The people at WHO were very involved in

the International Association of Bioethics, so we had access to that network. Of course each member has his or her own network, so it was pretty easy to exfoliate out from FAB. Now having said that, let me say that we have sufficient submissions that I could really use reviewers, so if there are any listeners out there with expertise in some area of bioethics or ethics related to health care, please send us your name and affiliation at IJFAB@sunysb.edu.

Steve: Dr. Rawlinson, you teach philosophy at Stony Brook, correct?

Dr. Rawlinson: That's correct.

Steve: What's the interplay between being the editor of this journal and your teaching? Are they antagonistic, synergistic? How's it work together? Are they two completely separate jobs?

Dr. Rawlinson: Oh, not at all. Most recently, my teaching has focused largely on our doctoral program. I'm very fortunate to be at Stony Brook, because my area as I've said is nineteenth and twentieth century Continental philosophy, and Stony Brook is the leading department in this area in this country. We have a kind of corner on this market in philosophy. So we have a really excellent population of doctoral students. We get about 250 applications a year. We maybe admit, I don't know, fifteen to get ten. It's extremely competitive, and they're excellent, excellent students. My managing editors, as I mentioned, are drawn from this pool of doctoral students. Adam Rosenfeld, who's one of my current managing editors who works on philosophy of technology was a TA for me in my 100 level class not too long ago. I serve on David Clinton Wills' dissertation committee. He's my second managing editor. Sarah McNamara, who's working with us as an editor this semester and is going to take David's position next year, is someone I've taught, I'm going to be her dissertation advisor, and she and I are co-founders and co-directors of the Luce Irigaray Circle. So this is very much integral to my graduate teaching, and very much something I did in part because of the experiences it would provide my graduate students, and the possibilities it would give me to collaborate with them. Indeed I'm sure the reason my president, Shirley Strum Kenney and my Dean James V. Staros the money I needed to do this is because they understood very well the importance of this for graduate education. Now one of the things we want to do is start integrating undergraduates into this. We're just getting started. We're not even two years old yet, so one of the plans we have is to apply for some work study assistants. We could really use some help. We'd like to identify two or three philosophy undergraduate majors who might want to work with us in some way. Again, it gives these graduate students a chance to make connections in the profession. Adam works on philosophy of technology, and is very interested in that whole end of bioethics. David Clinton Wills is working on the role of rhetoric in the treatment of AIDS, particularly in the African horizon. These contacts that they're making, getting to read all the papers, getting a sense of what the

field is in bioethics, it's just really helpful to them in their work. I am not a person who sees these divisions that are so often made between teaching and research. In fact, I wouldn't do something with my time that didn't serve teaching, research, my institution, my students. I see administration, service, teaching, research as a kind of package that everything I do ought to be directed against. Anything else is just bad conceptualization.

Steve: Well, Dr. Rawlinson, thank you very much for speaking with me today. Our time is actually up.

Dr. Rawlinson: Can I just mention we have an issue on transnational issues in health care coming out in the Spring?

Steve: Okay.

Dr. Rawlinson: Our conference issue is coming out in the Fall. We have an issue on disability studies coming out in the Fall of 2009, and we just accepted a proposal for a special issue on ethics in psychiatry. So I thought you might be interested in those things.

Steve: Very good. Subscriptions to *International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics* are available through the Indiana University Press for \$42 a year for individuals, or \$85 for libraries. Thank you for listening to Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

29: *Phi Delta Kappan*

Interview with Joan Richardson, Editor-in-Chief, February 2009

My guest for this program is Joan Richardson, editor-in-chief of *Phi Delta Kappan*, a well regarded education journal published continuously since 1915. As the magazine of the Phi Delta Kappa society, the journal presents to its members and to a broader audience research and commentary on issues, trends, and policies in education. Known for addressing tough issues in contemporary education and for including contrarian points of view, *Phi Delta Kappan* is found in almost 3000 libraries worldwide.

Steve: Joan Richardson, welcome to Periodical Radio.

Joan: Thanks very much.

Steve: Let's begin with the mission of the magazine and its relationship with Phi Delta Kappa. How does the magazine support the purposes of the organization?

Joan: Well, the three main purposes of Phi Delta Kappa are leadership, research, and service. The magazine is regarded as a key element in both the research component and especially the leadership component, as being a leader in the field. We've tried to more tightly integrate the magazine with the organization since I joined. There were a number of years where the magazine operated fairly independently from the rest of Phi Delta Kappa. But we're trying to ensure that there's a lot of exchange back and forth between the organizational needs and the magazine right now.

Steve: *Kappan* has a diverse readership. As editor, how do you ensure the content will be interesting to the broad spectrum of readers?

Joan: That is a challenge. *Kappan* is different from almost every other publication in education, because of our audience, about a quarter of our readers are from the university community. The rest of the readers are K-12 people—practitioners, teachers, principals, people in central offices. There is a juggle, trying to serve both audiences. What they have in common, however, is their interest in K-12 education. That's what draws the university people to the magazine and to the organization. Since we don't cover university level education, our focus is those K-12 schools. I think the interest everyone has in mind is how you ensure quality schools, quality teaching, quality education for all children. If you keep that at your forefront as you're looking at the articles that are appropriate for the magazine, the kind of articles that will assist in improving education at the K-12 level, then it's much easier to make decisions about which articles to accept and exactly the best way to publish them. But it's a mixed audience, unlike what you find certainly in the other associations. The other associations are focused on a particular niche of people in the field, whether they're principals or teachers or staff developers,

they're English teachers or math teachers. Phi Delta Kappa is a big tent, and everybody in the field is connected to us in one way or the other.

Steve: Joan, Phi Delta Kappa is an international organization, correct?

Joan: Yes, it is.

Steve: I've noticed that at least the issues I was perusing preparing for the interview, the majority of the articles focused on education in the United States. How do you balance having international membership and issues of international education?

Joan: It's interesting you bring that up because that's a topic of current conversation right now. We have primarily been an American, North American organization, really. I think the international audience comes to us primarily because of the perceived quality of American education. But I am looking down the road to how we can extend our reach beyond North American borders. I'm very interested in ensuring that we figure out better ways to get information, articles, about good practices around the world to this audience. Also figuring out a way to make sure that the educators beyond the United States have ways of sharing their own stories with each other. For example, I think that there's probably a great interest in Europe for example, not just in American ideas but in other practices within the European community. I think the Asian audience is huge, and that they have not only an interest in learning about American practices, but also in learning about what's going on in the Asian market as well. I don't know the best way to tackle that, but it is something that we're talking about, and are very aware of right now. I don't think we're unique in that. I think that a lot of us in publishing in education and elsewhere have figured out that the borders are changing, and there's a scramble to figure out how we better serve that audience around the world. We have some very active membership groups around the world, and I think they primarily come to us now because of what they perceive to be of value to them about the United States. But that could be changing.

Steve: That's interesting, because in the popular press one often sees unfavorable comparisons of United States education versus other countries. But from what you just said, we're seen as a positive example.

Joan: Oh, I think that's true. You can't always believe what you read, and I think there's no question that American education is still considered to be more equitable than educational systems you find in many places around the world. If you look at the number of students who come to the United States for college and for graduate school, the perception of the American educational system is still quite high. We continue to have that tradition.

Steve: Joan, my colleagues here in the School of Education here at Saint Rose have told me that *Phi Delta Kappan* has a reputation for publishing provocative points of view that challenge conventional wisdom. Would you agree with that perception?

Joan: Historically, that's been right, that *Kappan* is a little edgier than other publications in education. I think because we have such a broad reach, we're able to delve into some topics that might not be appropriate for some other organizations. I don't think PDK as an organization has ever been timid about that. I also think that because *Kappan* has a great interest not just in pedagogical issues, it also has an interest in professional issues. Any time you're time you're talking about professional concerns, you of necessity reach into topics that might be a little bit more controversial. For example, one of the topics that we hope to explore in the next year is looking at teacher compensation systems. That's become an issue in many, many places around the country. There's just an article this morning in my local newspaper about some innovative compensatory practices in three local school districts. With the change in the administration, it's very clear that the new Secretary of Education is interested in new compensation packages for teachers. That elevates it to a topic that I think would be of great interest to *Kappan* readers. I think it's unlikely that you would read about something like that in any of the publications produced by the other education associations. Again, that broad reach gives us the opportunity to delve into some topics that aren't likely to appear on the pages of other magazines.

Steve: So you do want to consciously maintain that reputation going forward.

Joan: I think that I want *Kappan* articles to be provocative. I want them to be thought provoking. I don't necessarily want be argumentative or put something out there simply for the sake of creating a controversy. I think there is a difference there. But I do want to make sure that we're on the leading edge of new ideas. That's a challenge, to ensure that you're ahead of the game and you're thinking about what the next issue is that people will be talking about. It's one of the great challenges that everyone faces in publishing.

Steve: *Kappan* publishes research articles, but they're written in a more accessible style than one would find in most scholarly journals. I noticed that the writer's guidelines for *Kappan* explain that many more articles are submitted than can be published. Can you describe the process you use to select which articles are published?

Joan: Sure . . .

Steve: You do not use peer review, correct?

Joan: No. *Kappan* has never been a peer reviewed publication. It has always been editor driven publication. In fact, I just got a query this morning from a major university asking

me about our acceptance rate, so I just recalculated it this morning. The acceptance rate for the last 6 months of 2008, I only became editor in July 2008, the acceptance rate was 16%. We had received about 200 articles during that period, and accepted sixteen percent of them. I expect that that will hold true down the road. The process is fairly simple. We have an open call for manuscripts. We do not announce themes for issues, even though we often collect articles around themes and publish them that way. But we maintain an open call, and the articles are e-mailed to us at manuscripts@pdkintl.org. I read everything that comes in, and I read them relatively quickly. If they pass muster with me, then they go on to a second editor. It's primarily just the two of us looking at them. The value we have there is that David Ruetschlin, who's the managing editor, has been with *Kappan* and PDK for a long time, and he has a remarkable recollection of what we've published in the past, and provides a great resource to me in helping me know what we've covered already, and who's written about various topics. We accept articles based on the quality of the idea, and the quality of the writing. We've had an overabundance of articles, for example, about No Child Left Behind and how really, really bad it is. It's unlikely that we're going to be publishing more articles on that topic in the short term here, because No Child Left Behind is changing. So most of those articles are not faring well right now, because of the timing of that. We're looking for edgy ideas, I'm looking for people who have clearly done good work and learned something from ideas they've put into practice, ideas that would be worth sharing with other educators. I'm not interested in articles that are about ideas that may be implemented. I want something specific that has been done. We look at the clarity of the writing. If somebody thinks they have a good idea, but I can't figure out what the idea is, it's not going to pass muster. I've had to say to a number of authors lately, "I'm just not clear on what you're trying to say." So we have the luxury of a large number of manuscripts, which enables us to be quite selective about what we produce. But we also solicit articles. There are topics that we believe are of importance to our audience, and we'll go after the people we want to have writing on them. We have for example an issue coming out in April which will have a number of articles related to urban education. That's not a topic that *Kappan* has spent much time on in recent years, so we have a number of pieces coming in related to that. We also have a number of articles in that issue about recommendations for a new federal role in education. None of those were submitted articles. All of those were invited by the editors. In June we'll be doing an issue on legal issues in education, and that entire issue is guest edited for us. So we're both blending what comes in over the transom, looking for the best articles there for our audience, and then also thinking about the topics that we want to approach, and making sure we have the best people writing about them.

Steve: Is that about a half and half mix, or . . . ?

Joan: Well, it's hard to say at this point, because I'm so new in this position. I'm also still trying to work into the publication articles that were accepted prior to my arrival on

the scene. Down the road, I'd guess it would probably be about half and half. But it might be a little premature to say that.

Steve: Joan, I want to change gears just a tiny bit now. A distinguishing feature of *Kappan* is the cartoons, which have been part of the journal's content since the 1950's. From an editorial point of view, what makes the cartoons valuable to *Kappan*?

Joan: When I was a *Kappan* reader, and not *Kappan* editor, the *Kappan* cartoons were something that would kind of lighten the load in the magazine. There's a lot of content in there, and it helps to break up the serious tone of the magazine, and to recognize that there's humor in everything. Anybody who's spent any time in a school knows there's a lot of humor in schools. Kids are very funny creatures, and teachers are pretty funny creatures, too. It offers a real world glance at what day to day life is really like in the schools. From a publishing perspective, it helps to have to a lot of different ways for people to interact with a magazine. Not everybody wants to read every article, but you want to give them opportunities to connect with something in your publication. The cartoons have clearly been a very successful way of doing that. As I think you know, we're redesigning the magazine for the 2009-2010 issues. We'll have a new look to the magazine starting next September. We did a large readership study to help us figure out what we should be doing, and what we should not be doing down the road. One very clear message is that we should not be messing with the cartoons (laughs). The cartoons will be around.

Steve: I did want to ask you about the redesign that you'd mentioned to me in advance of the show. What is driving the redesign, why is it necessary?

Joan: It's necessary for a lot of reasons. *Kappan* hasn't done a redesign, I don't think ever. I think it has moved along and there have been some small changes made over the years, and it has started to look very dated. It's very dense looking, it's been a very difficult magazine to get into and to read. Design-wise, it clearly needs to be updated very substantially, and we're working on that now. The other component of that is that we need to reach a different audience, an expanded audience over what we've had in the past. We have an older membership, and as happens with any publication that has an older membership, when people reach a certain stage in their life and in their career, they start to move on to other publications. We need to ensure that we are vibrant for a new generation of teachers and principals in schools. We really need to think about ways to position ourselves to both continue to appeal to the long-time readers that we've had, and also reach out very substantially to what I think of as the thirty year old readers that we want to have. Those would be people who have reached a point where they are career educators. They are not dabbling in education any more, they're not trying it out to see if it fits them. We're interested in the people who have decided after a few years in the field

that this is what they want for their life's work. We want those career educators and we want them on board with us about the time they're in their late 20's or early 30's, when they're in graduate programs. They might be at the point where they're looking at national board certification, and we want to make sure we're appropriate for that audience, as well. At the same time we redesign the look of the magazine we're rethinking the columns that we have, we're introducing some new features into the magazine. We'll be integrating the magazine more effectively on the web site. We'll have some pieces that are published only on the web. I expect that those will be columns as well as articles. We'll be introducing a blog on the web site, at least one, and we'll be offering better feedback components so that people will respond with letters to the editor, responses to articles online rather than in the print publication. So we're rethinking the whole package of *Kappan*. I kind of think of it like when you approach your house and you decide that you need to move the furniture in the living room. You move the furniture around a little bit, and it looks better. That's what we've done this year, we've moved the furniture around a little bit. But by next Fall, we are putting up a new coat of paint, we're washing the carpets, we're fixing that leak in the window, we're sprucing up everything. By September we're going to have a new improved and more completely thought out magazine.

Steve: Is that process being done entirely in house, or have you brought in consultants? How does that work?

Joan: Pretty much it's being done in house. We are working with one outside designer who's helping us with some components of it. Primarily it's just us.

Steve: Joan, you mentioned that you became editor-in-chief of *Phi Delta Kappan* in July 2008? Is the job what you expected?

Joan: The job is what I expected and more. First of all, it's a great honor to be editor of *Kappan* magazine. I think it's the best job in education journalism that there is. I have been overwhelmed by the . . . courtesy isn't quite the right word. There's a warmth that people feel for this publication that I did not anticipate, a generosity from readers and from writers that has really overwhelmed me. I've been very pleasantly surprised by what happens when I pick up the phone and call somebody and the response that I get. *Kappan* has been so well regarded for so long, that it has this reservoir of good feeling about it that I've been able to tap into. That's been really wonderful. It's also very daunting, because it's a publication with enormous tradition, enormous respect, and I want to ensure that I keep that going. The other big change for me is, I came from an organization where I worked with five or six different publications, newsletters and magazines, published books, managed a web site. In this job, I just focus on one magazine. But it's a

magazine that comes out every month, so it's a massively bigger job in many ways. So I'm running pretty hard most days to keep up, but I have loved it, I've absolutely loved it.

Steve: That's good to hear. These are kind of tough financial times for many publishers. I read and hear a great deal about how it's tough everywhere right now. The editors I've interviewed for Periodical Radio have described to me a number of different business models. I noticed on the web site that most of the content is either pay-per-view or restricted to subscribers. Other publishers have chosen to have more free content online that goes along with the printed magazine. Could just explain a little bit about how the current business model was selected, and what the main issues are from your point of view?

Joan: Well, I think with any membership organization, the business model is pretty much the same. You have members who are paying a membership fee to acquire the publication and other services of the organization. Because they have paid that, they become a selected group, and they have different rights than other people do because they've paid for that service. Everything is available to Phi Delta Kappa members online in the members-only area of the web site. They can search and download articles going back a number of years. But the public also has access to that. The archive is available on the public portion of the web site. Anybody can search that archive, and anybody can download an article, and they pay a small fee for that if they're not a member. That's a fairly standard approach in this field when you're talking about a membership association, which Phi Delta Kappa is. Having said that, we will be offering a few more things online in the public zone beginning with the next volume, because we need to broaden our reach and make sure more people are aware of the organization and the publication. The other piece that comes into play for even membership publications is advertising and sponsorships. That's a continuing challenge, I think for everybody these days as advertisers scale back on where they're able to spend their advertising dollar.

Steve: But *Phi Delta Kappan* is still financially strong and healthy and has a bright future?

Joan: Yeah, I think the organization is quite strong. The membership has declined, but there have been some staff cuts that have been made. There have been internal business decisions that have been made to keep the organization healthy. Bill Bushaw, the executive director, has made some very substantial changes in the organization in the four years he's been on board. I would not have joined the organization if I'd thought it was not financially viable.

Steve: Joan, is there anything else you'd like to mention before we conclude?

Joan: There's nothing I can think of, except that I welcome feedback, especially now as we're going through a redesign process, but also down the road when there's a new magazine that's out for people. I'd love to hear comments on that. I just generally like to get feedback from readers and people who use the magazine. I think your audience is one of the largest users that we have, and I hope they find my e-mail address, jrichardson@pdkintl.org, and just send me a note about what they think about what's going on.

Steve: Wonderful. Joan Richardson, thank you very much for being my guest on Periodical Radio.

Joan: Thank you. It's been a delight, thank you very much.

Steve: You're welcome. An individual annual subscription to [Phi Delta Kappan](#) is \$68 for 10 issues. Thank you for listening to Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

30: *Utne Reader*

Interview with editor David Schimke, February 2009

The topic of this, the 30th installment of Periodical Radio, is *Utne Reader*. Launched in 1984 by Eric Utne, the magazine's purpose is to present "the best of the alternative press." This illustrated monthly anthology is a convenient and attractive way to read stories not found in the mainstream media. To learn more about the past, present and future of *Utne Reader* and the alternative press, my guest today is editor David Schimke.

Steve: David, welcome to Periodical Radio.

David: Thank you, good to be here.

Steve: Eric Utne founded the magazine in 1984. Can you tell us a little about Eric and what his vision was for *Utne Reader*?

David: Sure thing. We have an issue that we do every year called "Top Visionaries," and I consider Eric to be one of those visionaries. He's a philanthropist, but he's also a social activist, and he had an idea to start . . . this actually started as a newsletter. The idea at the time was to give people an opportunity to see a sampling of all the small press and independent media that was taking place around the country that you couldn't get at your local newsstand. So it really started out as a *Reader's Digest* of sorts of the alternative media. It's interesting now that we see what's going on with the internet, because there's all these places people go to sift through various publications, all these portals. Long before the internet, *Utne* was really the first alternative press portal in print. The magazine took off very quickly. There were two or three of these newsletter-like publications, and they pretty quickly moved into a magazine mode, because they saw they could make some money with it and keep it sustainable. In the early 1990's, it really took off. If you look back at that time, there are press clippings in every major newspaper. That's when *Utne Reader*, the name itself, became a really popular one. At one point the top recognized brand for progressive media was *Utne Reader*. I think it's still in the top 5 or 10, actually. But one of the things Eric added to just the digest element were filters. The editors functioned as filters. As the magazine matured into the early 1990's, it became a magazine about looking for trends, and getting ahead of the mainstream press. You were seeing all these stories bubbling up and all these movements bubbling up in the alternative and independent media on the ground at the grass roots. So the magazine, a national publication like *Utne Reader* was combining sources and recognizing some fairly big trends. For instance, one of the things Eric recognized long before it got any national media attention was that there was an emerging men's

movement, and he got on top of that. That's really how the magazine got started and began to mature.

Steve: I see that Eric is still recognized as founder on *Utne*'s masthead, and he contributed a column in the Nov/Dec. 2008 issue. What's his role today at the magazine?

David: I'm really excited, because he hasn't really been directly involved for a while. Nina Rothschild Utne, who at the time she was running the magazine was married to Eric, took the magazine over from Eric and ran it for a while. So his name stayed on the masthead I think as kind of an honorarium. But in the last couple of years now, Eric and I have gotten to know each other really well, and spent time together. He's a great resource and a great ambassador for the magazine. We'll probably talk about this a little bit during our time together, but the magazine much more resembles what Eric started out doing, more than it has for a few years. So I think he's very happy with it, and he's agreed to write a column for us every other issue, which I'm very excited about. He's also going out speaking about the magazine, and we're going to be putting together an editorial advisory board in 2009, and he'll be on that. So he's involved as a consultant in spirit. On just a practical level, we get together for coffee every four or five weeks and brainstorm and talk about the magazine.

Steve: So David, go ahead and tell us some about how the content is returning more to the original roots.

David: Sure. There was a feeling in the late 1990's and moving into 2000 that because of the internet, the digest element of the magazine wasn't as valuable, or somehow was going to get overshadowed. So a number of things happened when Nina took over the magazine, I think wisely. Initially they chose to focus more on it as a progressive lifestyle magazine, and more of a social activist handbook, so it was less of a digest, and more of a . . . I guess I would compare it more to what you would see on the newsstand like *Plenty* (which actually just went out of business) or *Good*, or *Yes*, magazines that were very friendly to the activist community and kind of functioned as handbooks. I really think that at that point, the magazine's personality got a little bit washed out. There was some confusion among the readership about what we really were, and I think it watered down what we did best. So three years ago March, Nina sold the magazine to an entity called Ogden Publications, which is based in Kansas. Ogden owns *Mother Earth News*, and *Natural Home* magazine. At the time we were sold, we had reached a point where it was fairly clear that we weren't going to be able to sustain the magazine any longer. So Ogden took us under their wing, and they've been fabulous. They left Nina on as a consultant early on. Not only did they love what we do, but they really encouraged us to take some chances and do what we thought was best for the magazine, regardless of the economic ramifications, because they had the strength and the backing to sort of prop us

up for a while. So in meeting with the publisher and editorial director Bryan Welch, we both agreed both because it was my strength as an editorial person, and also because we both agree that *Utne Reader* really at its best represented this digest-like quality of the best of the alternative press. So we shifted back to that about two and a half years ago. I'm proud to say at this point that we've reestablished ourselves as a beacon for independent media and alternative media. It's a little bit harder news, a lot more sources, a lot more celebrating the publications in our library. We have about 1200 publications that come through our library every month. I think we saw our circulation drop, but now we're seeing it solidify. We're really doing well online, and I'm really proud of it. I come from a background in alternative media. I was a reporter and columnist and editor at alternative weeklies, so it's much more true to what I think is important right now.

Steve: You still have some content that's written by your editorial staff, correct?

David: Yes, and in fact I should clarify the fact that we are pushing more toward that digest and celebration of alternative media doesn't mean that we're all completely going to be reprint. I think it's probably about 60% to 70% reprint, and 30% original work. But even that reprint work, the work we do as editors is taking large pieces or several pieces and stitching them together, putting together what we call multi-source items in the front of our magazine, where we'll see a trend in say desertification in certain parts of the world. So we'll have a freelance writer or a staff writer go out and do research, and turn to all the journals and periodicals that we're seeing come through the library, do some original interviews of their own, so it's sort of a hybrid of original journalism and source journalism from other periodicals. We do that throughout the magazine. We also do some freelance assignments where we'll send a freelance writer and photographer out just to do something we find interesting that we know our readers will like. For instance, in the March/April issue we have this wonderful story about a Native American tradition that's evolved around gay and lesbian transgender individuals, a Native American celebration. We sent a freelance photographer to shoot that story, and a freelance writer to do the reporting. So again, it's a hybrid, and we do a little bit of both.

Steve: Do you ever accept unsolicited manuscripts or pieces that haven't been published previously?

David: We do, actually. Absolutely when it comes to freelance pitches, because our goal as a magazine is to be in front of the mainstream media and to spot things. So if I get a good story that comes through my queue, I definitely tune into it. Then of course we get manuscripts that are either in the works or maybe they have an agent or a publisher, but it hasn't yet been published. We'll sometimes excerpt from those things, as well.

Steve: For the stories that have been published, how does the copyright work on that reprinted material? Do you have to negotiate a permission with the publisher for each article, or do you have a standard that you follow?

David: We actually have to do each article individually. There's an associate editor here named Julie Hanus who does a lot of that work. We've always had, actually in the history of the magazine there's always been an editor who's spent a fair bit of time working on that. It really depends on the piece. Some magazines own the work, so you negotiate directly with the magazine. Some freelance contracts have the writer owning the work, so we negotiate with them. It really varies, and the price varies. What we find is that we're able to get the work relatively affordably, in large part because we celebrate the work. So if it's a publication, for instance, not only do we reprint the piece, we do a little write up of the magazine that it's from, we feature them online. Oftentimes if not always, my goal is to print from lesser known publications, so they're usually publications with a smaller circulation. It's usually a little easier to negotiate those rights than it would be to negotiate rights with Andrew Sullivan or somebody like that, who if we wanted to reprint a piece that had initially appeared in the *Atlantic* or something, that would be more expensive. But we will do that too, at times, if we find something really strong. We'll pay a little more for it. Julie's great. We have a certain budget that we work with each issue, and we just stitch together what we need to and try to hit that number.

Steve: Does Julie ever run into a problem where it's not a problem getting permission for the text, but there's a difficulty with the illustrations or the photography?

David: Actually, yeah, we have to negotiate that separately in most cases. If it's a publication sometimes we can get rights to the art work, but we actually do most of our artwork originally. So if it's a piece we illustrate, our art director Stephanie Glaros is really wonderful, and one of the things we like to do in the magazine as well, and the magazine has a reputation for this, is celebrate the work of illustrators and photographers who work in independent and alternative media. So we actually go out and contract our own illustrators. There will be an occasion where the illustration of the piece is so perfect and great we want to run it, so then we negotiate those rights. Sometimes we'll negotiate it individually with the photographer. The one thing you'll find is that photographers and illustrators typically have a different contract with magazines than writers. They're not as broad, so typically you have to do a little extra negotiation to get a hold of that work. The amazing thing about Julie is that I've been working with her as editor for a little over three years, and I've been at the magazine for almost six years now, and there's only been like one or two occasions when we haven't be able to get something.

Steve: David, *Utne Reader* is billed as "The Best of the Alternative Press," but some recently reprinted articles come from what I would consider the mainstream, like

Columbia Journalism Review and *Foreign Policy*. What qualifies as “alternative” for *Utne*?

David: Ah, it’s a fairly broad definition. I think what we try to do is almost always focus on publications, again, that aren’t as available or are a little bit smaller. Where we will sort of push that is when we find something that we think is so important, or so well done that we want to get it in front of as many people as possible. For instance, *Columbia Journalism Review* is a little more main stream, as is *Foreign Policy*, but their raw circulation numbers aren’t that high. So our sense as a staff is the information we’re imparting is of such great importance and so well done, we need to sort of push the boundaries of those rules a little bit. With book publishers, we do really try hard not to reprint from publishers over a certain size. We really try to stick with smaller houses. It’s been that way since the beginning, when I look back at older magazines. Actually believe it or not it’s something we spend a lot of time talking about around here, so if somebody does pitch something from a bigger publication, we really go around and around, trying to decide whether or not to reprint. The standards are higher when we choose to do that.

Steve: *Utne Reader* has its own library with a full time librarian, right?

David: Yes.

Steve: It’s Danielle Maestretti?

David: Yes, that’s correct.

Steve: Does she simply collect and organize the collection, or does she have a larger role at the magazine?

David: She has a much larger role. Everyone here is a multi-tasker. We put out the magazine really with five people. If you add the art department there’s seven. Danielle is one of those people. Everyone’s involved in planning the magazine, and actually at this magazine in particular, the librarian role is so key because we are sifting through so many publications, and reprinting and repurposing. So Danielle is really one of the key actors in getting the best stuff in front of us. She also does a column for the magazine, where she tries to go out and see how certain stories are being covered in the alternative press. For instance, she did a column about how prison reform is being covered. She did a column about Iraqi refugees. She turns to these smaller publications and tries to tell our readers what they’re missing, or what they could see if they looked that way. One of the ways we work as a group is we meet, we’re a little bit different editorial operation in the sense that we operate really as a democracy. At the end of the day, I have to make some decisions, and some calls in terms of the mix of what goes in the magazine, but we spend a lot of time as a group debating and passing around ideas and Danielle is a key member of that

group, as well. I tell people that we're less like a newsroom environment. I have worked in newsroom environments. We're less like a newsroom environment and more like a little think tank, because we spend so much time together sifting through all this great information, trying to decide what are the best few things that we can present to our readers each issue.

Steve: I would suspect that *Utne Reader's* library has one of the best collections of alternative publications really in the world. Is the collection used for any purposes other than supporting the magazine?

David: It's open to folks. We're actually in the process of trying to advertise a little bit more to our local community here in Minneapolis, that they should come use it. But yeah, it's open to the public. Danielle has relationships with a number of people in other libraries where she'll trade publications. You'll find that other independent magazines and alternative magazines are aware of the library and will turn to Danielle. So yeah, it's used more broadly, and I think you're right, it's one of the best libraries of its kind. The other thing that Danielle does because we do have limited space, at some point especially with our books we'll run out of space, and we have to do something with those books. So we have a couple of programs going with public libraries in smaller towns and rural areas. We'll have librarians come here from greater Minnesota and western Wisconsin and take some of these books back to their communities.

Steve: Tell us about the Utne Independent Press Awards. What are they, and why are they important?

David: Oh, what a great time to ask that. We're in the midst of picking our nominees. It's really an intense process. It's a lot of fun. We feel like in terms of being an ambassador for the independent press, and doing what we can to support smaller publications is really key. These publications really benefit from the recognition, and they use it in their advertising material and circulation material, and they tell us that it helps. The whole idea is that because we do count on these other magazines, really as the intellectual engine for the magazine, we need to point to the best ones each year. We typically have between ten and twelve categories. They shift a little bit from year to year, but they're fairly consistent. We try to have 8 nominees per category, and that's usually whittled down from, I'm not exaggerating, 30 or 40 magazines that start in each category. But I think, hopefully for the reader benefit, the pure reader benefit is for people to see them in categories like "politics" and "environmental coverage." There are magazines and journals that are doing work that's above and beyond what they're seeing in the mainstream media, and we want to make sure they know about it, because a lot of this stuff is accessible at their newsstand or bookstore, or they can order these magazines. So we think it's a great resource for our readers in that regard. For the magazines that we

recognize, specifically like I said, I think it's a good feather in their cap. They get really excited about it. A lot of these folks are toiling away for very little money, or no money at all, and just getting that recognition and getting their name out to our 250,000 readers is a big boost for them, and it just makes us feel good about promoting their work.

Steve: You mentioned “very little money, or no money at all.” I read a lot of dire reports about the financial future of magazines and newspapers. Is the independent press in trouble?

David: Yes, it is. There's just so much, especially now, it's just a double whammy, because you have a shift to more readership online, and advertisers not knowing exactly where to go. Then on top of that, nobody's really come up with a great way to monetize things online, especially editorial content. So that's tough. Then you add on top of this extreme economic downturn that we're in the middle of. A number of magazines closed this year. You know, it's interesting. I'm seeing that some of the bigger magazines in the mainstream media are struggling even more. I'll try not to get too wonky, but one of the interesting things about that is that bigger magazines like a *Time* and a *Newsweek* and a *Rolling Stone*, their whole economic strategy is built around building up circulation. They get this huge circulation of millions of people, and then they sell that circulation to the advertiser. They say, “Look at all the issues that are out there, here's the people you're going to reach.” In some sense, that circulation is false. A lot of that circulation is given away, some of it is purchased. Again, I won't get too wonky, but there's all sorts of expensive ways to manipulate that data, and make yourself look really big. The minute that advertising starts to fall off at all, which is what's happened now, that huge circulation cost really nails these companies. So you see magazines losing tons of money, cutting staff, going away all together. Some of the smaller independent magazines, and magazines like *Utne Reader*, as well, with a circulation that is around 20-30,000, 50,000, or in the case of some of the bigger magazines like *Us* and *Mother Jones* which are in the 100-200,000, it's a lot of magazines, obviously, but we're not selling circulation to our advertisers. We're selling an audience. We're telling people, “Hey, there may be only 70,000 people reading our magazine, but they're people who really love the magazine, they go out of their way to buy it.” So you're seeing some of the smaller magazines are having a little bit better time, assuming they were healthy going in, which is a big assumption. A lot of them are always operating on a shoestring, so any sort of deviation is going to hurt them. In terms of what's going to happen, it's really up in the air. It's a tumultuous, scary, and at the same time sort of interesting period to be in this business, because I think things are going to really shake out in the next 18-24 months in a number of areas in the media—daily newspapers, smaller magazines, bigger magazines, internet, the radio, even television to a certain degree. I think one of the things print media still has going for it is that tactile experience that people enjoy, and the portability. Also it's one of the few mediums now that are sort of filterless. You know, if you're watching TV you

can use your DVR and skip through commercials. If you're online, you can set filters. If advertisers want to get an idea or an image in front of people, print is still a way that...you can't erase a page, you're at least going to turn by it. So the goal of the advertisers is to catch people's attention. That might help print media a little bit. I also think you're going to see more and more magazines like *Utne Reader* and *The Nation* and *Mother Jones* adopt a non-profit or foundation model, so that they can continue to do the hard journalism that's not necessarily popular with people, or doesn't build huge audiences, but is really important. As a side note, I'll just say that outside the realm of publishing and being an editor, as a citizen I have some concerns about what's happening in the media right now, because the first thing that's being cut, and the last thing that's being invested in when things start to go a little bit better is the news gathering operations themselves. That's really problematic. There's less and less reporters being paid a living wage to go out and dig up stories. I love the blogosphere and I love citizen journalism, but it's a very reactive sort of journalism. It's not an investigative or in depth sort of reporting. You need people out there who can do that, and who can get paid to do that. I worry as a citizen about the quality of our information and where exactly it's going to come from. If these daily newspapers start to close the way it looks like they're going to, or really minimize their staffs, a lot of these internet portals and people blogging, at the end of the day they're depending upon the work that's coming out of these news rooms. Once that work goes away, I'm going to be curious to see what happens to democracy itself.

Steve: David, you mentioned that Ogden Publications bought *Utne Reader* in 2006. What was it like for you as editor to make that transition?

David: It was a really intense time. I was at a publication that was purchased and closed several years ago. I was at another publication where ownership changed sort of in the middle of the night. This situation was a friendly purchase. The due diligence process took place over a three month period. Nina Utne and Bryan Welch, the publisher and editorial director that I mentioned before had a great working relationship. They spent a lot of time in each others' offices, sort of figuring out how to make this work. In terms of just the practical shift, you have all those normal anxieties, like who's going to keep their job, is the staff going to downsize? What's really going to happen? What's really the goal here? Is this company true to our mission? Once I got to know those folks, I was really confident that they believed that our mission squared with theirs. Once the actual shift took place, I have to tell you, you know, it sounds like...I've told this to a couple of publications over the last couple of years, and I always preface it by saying I know it sounds like P.R. b.s., but the truth of the matter is I can't image a smoother transition. I feel really lucky, because in Minneapolis there have been a number of buyouts and closings and shifts in ownership, and a lot of that stuff gets really ugly. This company basically came in and said, "Hey, we really love you guys, we love what you're doing,

we know you've really been struggling, so we want to give you some more resources and see if we can make this thing break even and eventually become profitable." We're still working on that. But a lot of times when there's a buyout like this, content gets softer, it gets more generated to please a certain audience, and almost the exact opposite happened here, which was the publisher agreed with us that we need to be challenging, that we need to push the envelope a little bit, that we need to be really true to the spirit of alternative media, which is to be fearless and question things across the spectrum. It's been pretty amazing. I can tell you that without them, I don't think we'd be here any more. So it's just been a really good marriage so far.

Steve: Well, David, on that note we need to conclude.

David: Okay. It's been great talking to you.

Steve: Thank you very, very much. An individual annual subscription to [Utne Reader](#) is \$12. Thank you for listening to Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

31: *American Historical Review*

Interview with editor Robert Alan Schneider, March 2009

The topic of this installment of Periodical Radio is *American Historical Review*, the prestigious quarterly publication of American Historical Association. Published since 1895, it includes scholarly articles and critical reviews of current publications in all fields of history. To discuss the journal and its role for historians, my guest is editor Robert Alan Schneider, Professor in the Department of History at Indiana University.

Steve: Dr. Schneider, welcome to Periodical Radio.

Dr. Scheider: Thank you.

Steve: *American Historical Review* is a distinguished journal that's notable for its mission to publish and review scholarship from every major field of historical study. Why is it important in you field to have a history journal that does not specialize in one region, time period, or methodology?

Dr. Scheider: Well I guess the short answer is that historians cover the globe and cover all times and all places, and to one degree or another we have always tried to do that. Although our conception of the world over time, that is when you go back and see what historians have done, was once more limited, and now it's quite broad. So it's just being the journal of historians means that we really are obliged to do history in the broadest possible way to give credit to the kinds of history that is being done by the people we serve and by the people who are in the profession. But I think in a more important sense, really, and one which speaks to how history has developed as a profession, that sort of the natural tendency is for us to do our specific fields and to work our particular subject areas, which in some cases become narrower and narrower as people become more specialized and as the demands for research become greater and greater. So there's on the one hand a pronounced trend for sort of Balkanization and separatism and specialization, and you see this reflected not only in positions in history, but also in journals that are increasingly specialized, especially now with the possibility for digital journals which can serve a very, very limited number of people and scholars, which is good. I mean, specialization and deeply researched work is very, very good. You can't do the kinds of synthetic work unless you have the deeply researched specialized work. But the *American Historical Review* in a sense operates in a way that is to compensate, counterbalance that trend towards specialization and Balkanization. We try encourage the kind of work that while highly focused in many respects, still can speak to a broad range of historians, such that someone who does European history will have some reason to read an article on say Latin American history, or Asian history. In that sense, we are a kind of counterforce, an umbrella journal that tries to draw the interest and the attention

of scholars that has often normally focused on their own field to a wider tableau of history.

Steve: It must be a daunting challenge for you and your board of editors to evaluate submissions from such a vast breadth of scholarship. How do you manage the task?

Dr. Schneider: Well, we have a board of editors composed of twelve historians whose specialties are quite varied, and we really try to cover as many of the kinds of history that we get. Obviously, there we don't . . . for example we have a Latin American historian, and he happens to be a specialist of early modern Latin American history, so we don't have on the board a historian who does modern Latin American history. In that sense we can't have on the board representatives from all fields and all times of history, but we do have enough of a spread of specialties so we rely upon them. Also, we do for our review process rely upon outside experts. We might want to talk in this interview about the review process which I think will give people a sense of how we deal with the wide range of history that we receive. But you know in a sense my job as an editor is to be the stand-in for the historian in general. I'm an early modern European historian, so most of the history that lands on my desk is not in my field, obviously. But I read it not as a specialist. I read it as someone who comes at history with a general interest in history as well as a special interest in a particular field. I want to see how the different submissions speak to me as the generalist. So we rely up the specialist, but we also rely on the sensibility of the generalist, which is a stand-in for the ideal reader of the *American Historical Review*.

Steve: I do want to address peer review of the research articles, but I also wanted to ask a few questions first about the book reviews.

Dr. Schneider: Sure.

Steve: Book reviews are a very important component of *American Historical Review* and have been since its beginning in 1895. For our listeners who aren't historians, can you explain why book reviews are so important to your discipline?

Dr. Schneider: Well, they're absolutely fundamental. First of all, just the amount of scholarship produced in monographic form is so daunting, and ever increasing, such that any given scholar, even for his or her field, wouldn't have a sense of what's out there, what's being published without a journal like ours and other journals that at one level announce the books, but also provide summaries and some sort of critique. On one level it's a kind of inventory of scholarship that's come out, that tries to evaluate it. But also, peer reviews of books are essential for in a way evaluating scholarship and evaluating it for tenure, for promotion, which is also done through letters and evaluations that are private, in letter form. But to have scholarship reviewed by journals is a way of

authorizing or affirming that the scholarship is legitimate. I mean, monographs that are published are reviewed by the presses and the presses ask scholars to review the scholarship, but the review process continues, and it continues in a more public forum. The journal venues are one of the important ways in which scholarship is evaluated, either affirmed or criticized or otherwise judged. In a sense, without a book being reviewed, its existence is tenuous in a way. That is, the book is there, but not to be reviewed, especially not to be reviewed by the premier journal, which everyone at least has access to since it's one of the most widely circulated and available journals, the book's existence is sort of called into question, if you wish. That scholarship is not legitimized in the same way that other work is.

Steve: Many more books are published than there's space to review in *American Historical Review*, correct?

Dr. Schneider: Yes. We receive about three thousand books in the building here in Bloomington where we have our offices. We only have space to review a thousand. I have to say that one of the most time consuming tasks we have is just vetting the books, deciding which books to review and which books we should not review. There are certain categories of books we do not review. For those, the process of vetting or deciding is rather simple. We don't review textbooks. We don't review republished books. We don't normally review books that are biographies, unless they have some scholarly aspect which goes beyond the individual. We don't review books that are pitched to the general public, which are really synthetic or popularized versions of history. But beyond those categories, there's a whole range of books that are in kind of a grey zone. Is it scholarship, or is it not? There are no hard and fast rules. So for many of the books, we have to scrutinize them and make decisions which are problematic and I think open to question. One of the most frequent complaints we get from authors is "Why haven't you reviewed my book? My book came out by X Press as the result of so many years of labor, it is scholarship, and yet you decided not to review it." You know, often we take a look at the book again, and perhaps decide to review it, but often it's a matter of just explaining, "Well, we thought that this wasn't a scholarly contribution, and thus might be reviewed elsewhere." We also don't review documents, for example. So getting the 3000 down to 1000 is itself a very, very time consuming process which has a lot of fuzziness to it, I have to be honest about it.

Steve: But you feel comfortable with that fuzziness? I mean, you're in a position where you have to make such judgment calls.

Dr. Schneider: Well you do.

Steve: Does it weigh heavily on you?

Dr. Schneider: Well, it does, especially when I get complaints. Sometimes they're rather, you know, vehement. And I think this reflects the fact that not to have a book reviewed in the *AHR* really says something about it, or at least something about our view of it, so those are difficult decisions. But, you know, that's part of what we have to do. In most cases I think we're correct, and in the vast majority of cases people don't quarrel with us. It's very clear why we don't if it's a popular book, and this is no value judgment on the worth of those books at all. It's just a matter of whether they're appropriate to be reviewed in the *AHR*, which has a limited amount of space to do this. But if the book has no footnotes, if it's synthetic, if an author writes something for a general audience, then he or she ought to expect that with that comes the likelihood that it won't be reviewed by the *AHR*.

Steve: How are your book reviewers chosen, the folks who actually write the reviews?

Dr. Schneider: Well again, that's a time consuming process. I have to say that while I'm responsible for the book reviews in the sense that I'm the editor, fortunately I'm not involved in it, because otherwise I would have no other time to do anything else. We have a book review editor, Moureen Coulter, and she has a staff of graduate students who have been selected from the Bloomington department, the I[ndiana] U[niversity] Department of History, who are specialists in various fields and have languages that allow them to look at books and see what they're about in the various fields that we review. There are seven of those graduate students. So there are eight people responsible for the book review section, which is quite a bit. Again, we need those people in part because the process is so complicated and labor intensive. We choose the reviewers based upon a database that we have, that we've accumulated with 50,000 names or something, it's really quite enormous. The people in the database are from all over the world who are specialists in various fields. One of the things we have to do, which again makes the process somewhat difficult, is we have to weed out all of those people who have had any role in the writing or production of the book. That is, all the people who are thanked in the acknowledgements, and I have to say, sometimes in smaller fields, this really eliminates virtually every potential reviewer. If I had a message to historians, I would say be careful in the number of people you cite in your acknowledgements, because they're eliminated as possible reviewers. So we have to go through them and then check them against the database and see if . . . we normally don't have people review a book for us more than once in a calendar year. So if you reviewed a book for the February issue, you wouldn't be able to review a book for the October issue. We get a certain number of people who have been chronically late, and we don't ask them. So often, we have to really search high and low to get people to review books. But again, that's part of what we do, and we spend a lot of time, and we try to be very careful in getting the right kinds of people to review these books, who have the kind of expertise. Especially in smaller fields and subspecialties, an insider, especially an expert or a scholar in that field him or

herself might quibble, but we do the best we can. I think the results are rather good. I think the reviews are serious and to the point, and fair.

Steve: Each issue of *American Historical Review* includes “Communications,” which seem to usually be disputes between a book’s author and its reviewer. I would suspect that authors usually disagree with negative reviews, and that such dialogues sometimes descend into petty spats.

Dr. Schneider: Um, hmm.

Steve: How do you determine which communications are worth publishing?

Dr. Schneider: Well, you know we do get a certain number of letters, not a whole lot. I’m actually surprised. I’ve been in this position, this is my fourth year. I’m surprised that not every issue even do we get responses to reviews. I think in part, reviewers are in general pretty gentle. It’s rare to have a really, really critical review of a book. I don’t know what this reflects. It might reflect a certain kind of self-censorship among reviewers. It might reflect the fact that a lot of work is at the very least solid, and I think that’s part of it. The standards of our profession are rather high. The outcome is that there’s a kind of evenness and gentleness about reviews, I think fairly so. In fact, I think reviewers could be more critical, but you really can’t push that, it’s up to the reviewers themselves. So we get a small number of responses to reviews. We almost always publish them, as long as they deal with the content of the book, and they’re substantive. I have just recently turned down a letter, I had an exchange with the scholar in question--it was really quite sharp. He really wanted us to point out that the person who reviewed his book had something against him because this guy had written something critical about him in a previous essay, and that’s really all he wanted to say, that this explains why he was critical of the book, because he had some sort of payback that he was indulging in. I said this is just not enough. This doesn’t tell us anything about the issue, this tells us about something that you think is at play, but there’s no way we can prove it. Just because someone had been critical of somebody else’s work doesn’t mean that this is the reason why he’s critical of the book. After all, there are reasons to be critical beyond the personal, and you just can’t make that assumption. That’s the kind of thing that would have performed no service to our readers. It would not have drawn out any issues, wouldn’t have thrown more light on what’s at stake. I think that’s really what’s important, that we not degenerate or devolve into petty tit for tat, but rather keep our eye on what’s important here.

Steve: Let’s turn now to the research articles that are published and the peer review of them. What are the similarities and differences between the peer review processes for research articles and reviews of books? The books are open, so the reviewer knows who

the author is, and the author will know who the reviewer is. For the research articles, is it a double-blind process?

Dr. Schneider: Yes. We have actually three stages of reviews, so maybe I should just summarize our review process.

Steve: Sure, go ahead.

Dr. Schneider: It's more rigorous and somewhat complex. Everything that comes in the building here that we receive, almost electronically these days, is read in house, if only to see whether it's appropriate. At that point, a lot of submissions are just rejected right off the bat. They're either too long, or really too short, or they're too narrow, or they're clearly of a quality which does not warrant further consideration, and we just return them with a note pointing out how they do not fit our remit and the kind of standards we have. We do always write something, however, to the authors. If an article is somehow promising, if it fits all the criteria and seems to be the kind of material that we would be interested in, we will write an in house critique or review of it. Then in many cases, although not all in fact, probably only thirty or forty percent, we send it on to two members of the board of editors. At this point the articles are not masked, because it's important that the board members not only evaluate the manuscript, but also tell us what sort of outside readers would be appropriate to evaluate this, and that they should know the author in case there are some entanglements or problems with potential readers because of previous controversies, either of historiographical or intellectual nature, perhaps sometimes even of personal nature, where there are departmental problems or whatever. That is to say, we have found that it's helpful that at this point the board of editors know the author's identity. Then normally that second stage of the review process is played out, and then we get the reviews back from the board members, and then we decide what to do. In most instances the article is sent back to the author with either a revise and resubmit or the article is rejected. The third stage, if at that point we receive it back again, or if it's a really good piece and can be moved on, we then send it to three outside experts. The board members as well as us in house, we're very, very keen on getting the right kinds of people, which is why we need the advice of board members and others in finding the right specialists and the right range of people to read it. We find three people who are experts in the field to review the manuscript. At that point it is masked. The reviewers will not know the identity of the author, and the author will not know the identities of the reviewers. So what that means is that a full review process will generate six reviews--one in house, two board members, and three outside experts. That's where we really then have a full evaluation upon which we make a decision about what to do with the manuscript.

Steve: It's an honor to have a research article published in a journal as prestigious as *American Historical Review*, so naturally authors are disappointed when their manuscripts are not accepted. Approximately what percentage of submissions are accepted?

Dr. Schneider: We've been running at about nine percent. That sounds like impossible odds. I'm obliged to be honest about that, and in some ways it's not something I want to hide. It speaks to how difficult it is, and thus as you say, how important it is, and what an honor it is to be published in the *AHR*. It's like bragging about getting into a college that only accepts ten percent of its applicants. But you have to take into account that we get a lot of submissions that are just inappropriate. I mean, I'm convinced that many of the people who submit articles have never even looked at the *AHR*. We do get some undergraduate essays that are very short or synthetic, or submissions from amateur historians who are writing about some great, great, great grandfather who fought in the Civil War, which are perfectly interesting and charming, but not for us. So the nine percent has to be taken with an understanding of the vast range of material we get. The fact is the bar is rather high. I have to tell authors often when I reject a manuscript that this doesn't mean--and I do write letters that explain the grounds for not accepting the piece--it doesn't mean the work is not good or solid or correct. It's not a reflection upon the legitimacy or worth of the scholarship, and we often say it should be published, but not in the *AHR*, but rather in a more specialized journal. The fact is that in order to be published in the *AHR*, the work must not only be excellent, but also have a kind of reach, or be open to the interest of our wide readership. I mean, that's what distinguishes us from virtually any other journal. We do try the best we can, and I will admit that we are less accessible at some times than others, but we try to make our articles open to the wide readership of American Historical Association and others who come to us with the idea that we will provide scholarship that addresses a wider range of concerns that more specialized journals don't, and shouldn't, quite frankly.

Steve: In early February 2009 a rejection actually made the pages of the *New York Times*, and you were quoted regarding why the article was rejected. Could you sketch for us briefly what happened, and what lessons should be drawn from that experience?

Dr. Schneider: Yes. I did write about this the History News Network, and I think it's still available ("The 'Nixon Tapes,' an Author, and the American Historical Review," Feb. 9, 2009, <http://hnn.us/articles/61694.html>). I really wanted that to stand for my view of things, but I'll be happy to talk about it. This was a matter of a submission by Peter Klingman. I mention his name because he went public with this information. Normally I wouldn't discuss a rejected manuscript, and certainly wouldn't disclose the name of the author, but in this case he went public with it in a big way. He submitted this piece that

was about the Nixon Tapes, and really was largely a kind of corrective piece that had a definite *ad hominem* aspect to it. He and others have objected with the way Stanley Kutler, who was the person who first edited and published the tapes in book form, Klingman and people who think like him believe that Kutler at the very least was sloppy in transcribing the tapes, and in fact go beyond that and believe that he deliberately misrepresented and incorrectly transcribed the tapes in order to push a particular perspective on Nixon and John Dean and the like. Anyway, his article was really was of that sort. It was really very much aimed at Stanley Kutler and it made a lot of accusations having to do with his work, you know, using terms like “falsification” and “deliberate inaccuracies” and “sloppiness” and the like. We read it and could not and did not at that point make any determination on whether Klingman was correct or really on whether this was worthwhile. It just seemed very, very narrow. It was a corrective of a certain body of evidence that obviously has a certain importance in American history, but that didn’t seem worthy of the *American Historical Review*. It didn’t have an analysis, it wasn’t conceptually interesting, and it was, as I say, not just the tone but the language was *ad hominem* and did not belong in a scholarly publication. It was not scholarship in that respect. So I wrote a letter of rejection, but even before that he had gone to the *New York Times* and/or people close to him had gone to the *New York Times* and got this submission publicized. This is before I even saw the manuscript, before it even got to my desk. This really bothered me. Forgive me for going on and on about this, but this is where I think the larger and more interesting point lay. That is to say, here a journalist for the *Times* is sort of convinced he used the fact that an article was submitted as somehow elevating the piece, that is Klingman’s piece, whereas I pointed out in a letter to the editor that wasn’t published in the *Times* that anyone can submit an article to the AHR. We receive 300 a year. It means absolutely nothing, the fact that it’s submitted. In fact, someone pointed out that a piece is not an article until it’s accepted. It’s just at this point a piece of writing that someone has submitted, and it’s not scholarship. I mean, scholarship is only scholarship once it’s been vetted, and of course this wasn’t vetted, and we made our own judgment on it that it was inappropriate. But we made no pronouncement in terms of the accuracy or legitimacy of the scholarship. Anyway, this then became news, right? Klingman, once he got the letter of rejection from us, went very public with it, and had my actual letter posted on the History News Network, clearly disclosed the letter to the *New York Times*, and thus that became the basis for another article, the headline of which was something like “*American Historical Review* Rejects” this article, as if this was somehow big news. At that, I felt I had to intervene, and I wrote the piece for the History News Network [linked above]. I also talked to Clark Hoyt, who’s the public editor of the *New York Times*. He subsequently wrote a piece on the whole affair (“They Still Have the Nixon Tapes to Kick Around,” February 22, 2009), and cited me just in passing, saying that I didn’t think was very serious scholarship. My interest now is not so much on this particular affair, which I don’t think warrants the kind

of attention it has attracted. My interest is how the realms of scholarship and news intersect, or interact. That to me is still of some interest, the idea that, you know, when do journalists pick up on scholarship and how much should they pay attention to the vetting process, by which scholarship is legitimized, at least by other scholars.

Steve: Dr. Schneider, I would love to continue this conversation. We didn't get to all my questions, but unfortunately our time is up. You've been a very, very interesting guest, thank you very much.

Dr. Schneider: Well, it's my pleasure.

Steve: *American Historical Review* is a benefit of membership in the American Historical Association, online at <http://www.historians.org/>. They offer a range of memberships ranging from \$38 to \$200 a year. Thank you for listening to Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

32: Bible Study Magazine

Interview with Associate Editor John D. Barry, April 2009

The topic of this installment of Periodical Radio is *Bible Study Magazine*, a new bi-monthly periodical by the publishers of Logos Bible Software. It's a colorful and readable magazine that draws from the serious scholarship of professors of religious studies, history, and archeology. The editors' statement of faith is the Apostle's Creed, and the magazine is intended to be non-denominational. Joining me today is *Bible Study Magazine's* Associate Editor, John D. Barry.

Steve: John Barry, welcome to Periodical Radio.

John: Thank you.

Steve: John, to address the vision and purpose of *Bible Study Magazine*, I'd like to begin with your publisher, Logos Bible Software. Please tell us a little about the company and why they chose to launch a magazine.

John: Logos Bible Software is a digital publishing company, so what we do is we take books from I believe around 120 publishers, and we publish them electronically. Basically our goal is to not just do e-books, but to do something that's linkable, fully searchable, connects with the whole rest of your library and everything. It's pretty exciting. It's an amazing tool. On top of it all we have Bible search tools within that. You can enter a passage, click go, and all these things will be pulled up from your library that give you information on that. So it essentially searches your entire library for you as if I was your own research assistant. It's really incredible. So I was using the software before I came to work here, just because I love it. Then there's a second thing, which is *Bible Study Magazine*, of course. We launched *Bible Study Magazine* because we don't just have tools, we have users who want to know how to use those tools. So we can show them how to use the tools within the software, but they also have the question then, "Well how do I determine what's best? How do I know how to go about Bible study? How do I do a word study beyond there?" If I want to be able to filter all those results and know different things about them and where they're coming from different angles, and things like that. They have all these how-to questions about Bible study, and *Bible Study Magazine* is our answer to that. It explains how to approach Bible studies, how you go from just reading the text to actually studying your Bible. We've offered them the tools already, but now we're trying to offer them the methods to go along with those. So we're taking good, sound Biblical scholarship, and we're conveying it in a way that anyone can understand. We're trying to translate, essentially, what Biblical scholars do into anyone's terms. So our goal is to see people study the Bible as a company all together. Our vision is, we want people to know the Bible. To do that, we've already created the tools I've

mentioned, but now the magazine is offering that next step, that step to being in your Bible every day and having both the ability, if somebody is a print user who's not a user of the software how to do it in the print books, and if they are users of the software they can do that as well. So everything we do somehow involves the step of actually doing the Bible study. So it doesn't just go through a passage. For example, I do Hebrews in my article in the magazine in my ongoing section. We do an ongoing Bible study eight weeks with Hebrews. We don't just go through Hebrews, we talk about how to actually do the study. So instead of offering answers, I'm offering questions. I'm trying to help people inductively go through a study, and then say, "Okay, now what can I use as tools to help them do this as well." So instead of saying, like, okay here's the basic doctrines the author is talking about and here's the answers to what he means, go search it for yourself, go find out, and this is how you do it. So we're trying to do both the tools and the how-to. That's our general perspective as a company.

Steve: How would you define your target audience? You pretty well just described the sort of enquiring person who would be interested in this. But demographically, how large is the audience, who are you trying to reach?

John: We have 11,000 paid subscribers. A good 9,000 plus of those are individual one year subscriptions, and the rest of those are buying in bulk copies, to do with their groups or whatnot. Most of these people are actively engaged in church. A lot of them are ministers, but most of the ministers are trying to get it for their community instead, now. It's coming to a point where a lot of these ministers are realizing they can't offer the whole gamut, they're just too busy, right? So what they're doing is they are starting to pick up our tools as they did before, but now adding our magazine, which is only \$14.95, right? It's a really cheap way for them to get their community into the Bible. So it's all sorts of people from all different walks of life, as far as the spectrum goes. Most of our readers are probably evangelicals. We're actually doing a reader survey right now so we can determine all that. We know who our readers or users are of our software, but now since we have a brand new publication we're doing a reader survey with our next issue, and it will be an online survey readers can take. Then we'll know exact facts on who these people are. That's really helpful for us, of course, because then we can write articles even more to them. We have a general idea who the person is, and we try to always write to someone who has no background in Bible or Bible studies. We don't assume a knowledge base. So if we use a definition, we define it. We try to take the lowest common denominator as far as understanding, and work from there. But we try to do in depth study at the same time, so if we do something really in depth that may be perceived as something not anybody could get, we'll define things all along the way, and use steps to get them to where they need to be so then they can work with us. We're trying to make sure everybody can understand, that's the goal, that everybody can get it. So as far as who the actual people are, likely Christian, almost definitely Christian, evangelical. But

that doesn't characterize us, because we're trying to be non-denominational in our publications, so we try to take on various perspectives. We even have a Jewish writer who works with us. We're recruiting Catholic and Orthodox writers. We're trying to get a whole gamut of perspectives on the Bible, and trying to get an interdenominational thing going as far as Bible study goes. So far we've covered people who are from all sorts of different walks as far as teachers and speakers and writers. We're trying to make sure everybody's getting their viewpoint in, but at the same time, trying to make sure those are as unbiased as possible. So we can hit every single one of the people in our target zone. Our goal is if you like the Bible, then *Bible Study Magazine* is for you. That's what we're trying to be. That's a tough goal, reaching a demographic that wide. But the way we do that is we ask the question always, "If this was somebody who has never read the Bible, who had just come to decide to read it, whether that be through faith or other reasons, and they want to understand it, can we reach them? Is this article for them?" If the answer to that is yes, then we've done our job. If it's no, we change it.

Steve: One of the questions I wanted to ask was whether you have or are planning to have authors from a Jewish or a Catholic perspective, and you just answered that. The answer is yes.

John: Yeah, definitely.

Steve: Why is that important? I mean . . . Let me back up a little bit. When someone first looks at your magazine, they might have a presumption about it being of a particular viewpoint. They might have to get into the magazine and read a little bit to understand that your goal is to be non-denominational and bring in various perspectives. Why is that important as part of your vision?

John: It's important because for us, we want to have the most unbiased Biblical interpretation possible. Now, you know, Boltzmann a long time ago said there is not interpretation possible without biases. We all know that's not possible, because everybody has their own perspective. But as part of doing that, as you mention, as I was referring to earlier too is having writers from different denominations. That helps to vary the perspective. So everyone's going to have their perspective, and we don't want to take that away from our writers. That's what makes them who they are. But at the same time we want to be able to make sure they're covering all the ground of Biblical scholarship. Are they addressing the historical issues? Is this really what the text meant? So to get beyond those denominational perspectives, what we're trying to do is talk about what the text means for its context. The application we allow to be however they want it. The application is kind of a separate process that's based on who the person is as far as an author goes. For us, we want to make sure that the perspective is varied. If it's not, then we're missing out on something. We're missing out on what we can learn. I'm a

Protestant, for example. I go to a Baptist church. But one of my favorite authors is Luke Timothy Johnson and Leonard Greenspoon, who actually writes for us now. Leonard Greenspoon is Jewish and Luke Timothy Johnson is Catholic. For me, I've found in my scholarship how much it helps me to have a perspective from a different denomination. Both Leonard Greenspoon and Luke Timothy Johnson have the ability to look at a text in way that's different than me, simply because they've been raised differently, they understand things differently, they have a different perspective. That is hugely important, because it changes our worldview. It helps us to understand number one, how we fit together as denominations. But number two, it helps us all realize we have something in common, and that's the Bible. No matter where we come from, we have the bible in common. In our first issue we even had a Canon chart showing all the different Canons and how different denominations put together their Bibles, including different books in some that other ones don't. Part of our point in doing that was to say, "Hey, yeah, we differ a lot." We have a lot of books that each of us includes as sacred that others don't. But there's a set of books we all agree upon, and on top of it all, for those of us who don't have those other books, maybe we should look at them. Maybe we should see them in a new light, and maybe we should think about them. Even if we don't see them as sacred necessarily, they're going to shed light on the Bible for us, on what we consider Bible. For those who consider them sacred, well that's great, then we're talking about them. So it goes both ways. It becomes a conversation basically within our magazine, and a way to see things together. On top of it all, it becomes something that says, hey, this is the Bible, raw, uncooked, it's the way it is. Let's look at the Bible for what the Bible is, and let's deal with that. That's something we can all agree upon, because no matter where we come from, we all agree on Bible study. Studying the Bible is important. So that's what we're trying to offer, and that's part of our larger vision as a company as well. We're trying to offer a perspective of the Bible in all gamuts. Our CEO Bob Pritchett has multiple times said, you know, there's something in our library to make everybody happy, and to offend everybody, too. Our digital library has nearly 9,000 books, or maybe even more now. We have everything. You can love it, you can hate it. There's multiple things within that library, so you choose what works for you. That's part of our policy as a company and likewise as a magazine. If there's an article that doesn't work for somebody, we hope they'll see other articles that do work for them. You can't ever please anybody wholly. You can do all you can to help them and to lead them, but nobody's going to be happy with everything, you know. The only people who are happy with everything are the editors, and even they aren't sometimes. It all depends on where you're coming from. We shouldn't be too worried about where they're at, and offer them what we can, and offer them a varied perspective.

Steve: One of the things I noticed about that *Bible Study Magazine* is that it includes some mildly provocative features like "What They Don't Tell You in Church." What

would you say to readers who may experience some shock or dismay by what they read in the magazine?

John: Oh, um, I'd say keep on reading, because the point of "What They Don't Tell You in Church," which is even the one with the Canon chart or we dealt with the Magi in that section, or does the author of Ecclesiastes need Prozac? There are all articles we have had in that section, and in the next one we have stuff about David and Goliath and Goliath's height. How tall was he really, and who really killed him? Things like that. We ask these questions and they're provocative, but these are the questions that the Bible and our denominational views are asking. The reason we call that "What They Don't Tell You in Church" is because these are things you really will not hear in church, unless you have an extremely well educated pastor or leader in church or minister, whoever it is, leading you along to ask these questions. These are questions we think a lot of people ask, but they never get answered in their church. What we do in this section is say, you know, growing up or whatnot, or even in my church now, and we ask our writers the same question, what question do you have that people have never answered? When you ask it, they kind of look shocked, or like you shouldn't be asking that here. Then what we do is we then try to answer it. The point of those provocative sections is to answer the deep questions. What we find is that sometimes they present more questions than answers even, like the Canon chart. But there are other ones like the Magi or Ecclesiastes that present answers that oftentimes have never been presented. These are new scholastic views we're presenting in our magazine, like our view of the Magi or our view of Ecclesiastes. It's exciting for people, because they're hearing something that's not only fresh to them, in fact it's fresh to Biblical scholarship. So we're trying to say hey, this is something you wouldn't hear anywhere else. You heard it here, right from the horse's mouth at *Bible Study Magazine*. That's what we're trying to offer. We also have a section that's pretty provocative called "I Dare You Not to Bore me with the Bible." The guy who runs the magazine beside me, Michael Heiser, writes that section. The point of that is he said, you know, when I walk into Sunday school classes, and I begin to teach, I feel like people look at me thinking, I dare you not to bore me with the Bible. They're bored a lot of times. It becomes this dry thing, but we think no, it's not dry, it's exciting. The weird stuff is actually important. We're trying to say hey, all that stuff in the Bible that seems dry, it's really not. You're just not getting it yet. So then once we offer what it means to get it, to understand it, then all of sudden it becomes exciting. Like who took John 5:4 out of my Bible, and that's one of our passages there we dealt with. It's dealing with deeper issues of scholarship that answer the deep questions people have. It's just not offered, because it never makes the leap from scholarship into church. There are exceptions of course to that rule. I say that as a generality. Of course there are exceptions, but it often doesn't. We're trying to offer it in a way that will make people excited and want to read.

Steve: Scholars of the Bible know very well there are plenty of contradictions and ambiguities among sources and translations, and folks new to reading the Bible as you said you want to reach that audience, don't necessarily know that. You're kind alluding to that there's sort of a leap there, an aha moment perhaps of realizing that the version of the Bible they have in their hands didn't just magically appear?

John: I think that's probably part of it. Part of it is the aha moment of realizing it didn't just magically appear, it was a process, and that's part of the beauty of the Bible, it's being a process, as it being something that worked through communities of God who were trying to follow after Him and who were writing texts and editing texts, and then canonizing texts and putting them in the Bible. That's part of it, the aha moment of realizing that's what actually happened, and also realizing that of course translations differ. Everyone knows that, but realizing why, I mean our example there earlier of the John passage, of what's in there, and why is this verse missing. Well we show that through English translations, even though it's based on the Greek manuscripts. We were able to show that different English translations base their texts on different manuscripts. We were able to get to what's actually going on there without having to go into the Greek. When we do go into the Greek, we of course define it all through the English standpoint. There are things like that, where they are going to get this aha moment using the Greek or Hebrew or understanding where the original text came from, or seeing where the translation came from. We want that for our audience, because we've experienced that ourselves. Michael Heiser and I have both had a long road of getting into the Bible and questioning things, and in fact having a hard time sometimes in churches, because we question too much according to some people. But we've done it in faith. We've done it in belief. We were faith seeking understanding. That's the quote there, and we were doing that. We had a hard time oftentimes, because of that. So now we're trying to help the people who are in the position we were, but also help the people who are on the other side of the fence, the people who are opposed to it, and gently show them what is actually going on there, and it's okay. That's God's diverse perspective, and God is like that. God's amazing, he's powerful, he's different from us, so we're trying to show it's okay to view the Bible that way, and it's okay to ask questions. In fact, you'll be better off for it, and know more, and be able to answer more questions from other people, and it's going to teach you, and you're going to learn. In the end, you're going to be happy about it. It may be a road getting there, but it will change your life. That's what we're trying to do, to change people's perspectives because it doesn't just better them, it betters their community. It creates a stronger feeling of accomplishment and understanding among the whole community, all the way around.

Steve: Is it a goal of yours as an editor to promote religious tolerance through this sort of understanding?

John: No, it's not necessarily a goal. Obviously it's hugely important to realize the differences in religions and to realize the differences in denominational perspectives and to not want to beat each other up over those things. It's hugely important. Our goal is Bible study. That's just kind of a secondary thing that happens when you're honest with the text. It's almost inevitable that the text will lead you places you didn't expect it to, and show you things you didn't expect to find. We're not trying to promote religious tolerance necessarily. I think it may be a secondary outcome of what we do. Of course that's good. It's good that we understand each other better, but it's not our goal. Our goal is to help people to study the Bible, that's our ultimate focus.

Steve: I'd like to switch gears just a little bit now and ask a couple of questions about the running of the magazine, and pick up on something you've alluded to already about who your authors are. Along those lines, I wanted to ask, does *Bible Study Magazine* welcome unsolicited manuscripts, or are all of the articles ones that the editors either write or seek out.

John: We welcome unsolicited manuscripts, but we're a short magazine. We're 48 pages, 52 with cover, and so we're a short magazine. The reason is we don't want to overwhelm people. We want them to be able to read everything we produce. We keep our magazine short for that reason, and we keep everything succinct. That's one of our big goals as writers and editors, to keep everything succinct and to the point. We get a lot of unsolicited manuscripts. We look at them, we always read them, either I do or Mike does, or someone else around here, but usually it's one of us. So far we haven't actually published anything unsolicited, but that's mainly because we haven't gotten anything really good yet. I'm sure we will, and I'm looking forward to the day. It's great as an editor to get an article that you didn't expect that you love, it's wonderful. It's a lot less work for me for that to happen, so I appreciate it of course. So we do welcome unsolicited manuscripts, but we usually ask people for a resume and samples of their other work, just to see where they're coming from and how they write in general. It helps to see more than one sample, more than just what they submitted. Of course if someone submitted something absolutely outstanding that I was blown away by it and wanted to publish right away, I wouldn't worry about seeing anything else. But so far that hasn't happened.

Steve: What efforts do you expect you'll need to make over time to make sure that you maintain a non-denominational perspective, to keep from sliding predominantly into one denominational perspective or another.

John: It's multiple factors there, of course. The first factor is going to be finding more really good writers who are from various perspectives. That's something we really want, and we're working on. The second thing is going to be of course like Michael Heiser and

myself continuing to engage in Biblical scholarship. We're both members of the Society of Biblical Literature, which is of course a non-denominational organization that's about the study of the Bible and other literature related to it. So we're both exposed to that regularly as far as a group that's definitely not from a Christian or any type of religious perspective. They try to be as unreligious in their approach as possible, and just deal with the text. The other factor for us is to always ask the question, "What's really going on here? Is this person interpreting the text for what the text is, or are they interpreting out of another motivation? Sometimes it's not even religious, the other motivation, sometimes it's just wanting to make a point. We have to be really careful with those. We have a very extensive editorial process. It takes a huge amount of depth and rewriting when necessary, and all sorts of things as far as going back and forth with writers and dealing with issues. We spend a lot of time putting together an issue, an immense amount of time. The reason is because we want to make sure that things are not coming from that perspective as far as actually saying, you know, here's this particular denominational view on this. Instead we want to say, "Here's the Biblical view." Here's what the Bible says. For us it always comes back to is this what the Bible says, or is this what your doctrine says. Those are oftentimes two separate things, sometimes they're the same. My hope for all communities is that those two will be the same, but obviously there's a lot of extra-Biblical doctrines people have, too. I happy for them to affirm them, I just don't allow that in our publication. It's something that not everyone is going to hold, and that's presenting a view that more reserved for a magazine that's made for that. For us, ours is not made for that. Ours is for dealing with the Bible. We try to do that from as varied a perspective as possible.

Steve: So far, have you gone beyond your editorial board and talked to outside experts, in a way similar to what a scholarly journal would do in the peer review process?

John: Oh, absolutely, yes. Recently we were writing an article, in our next issue we have this David and Goliath special edition section, and it's a good example. We were wondering about the height of people in the ancient world. Michael Heiser being a great expert on all sorts of very ancient things had a good idea, but we wanted to talk to somebody who was an archeologist who had dealt with lots of skeletal remains. What would David's height actually have been? What was the average height of a male in Israel at that time? We found four or five different scholars, and we talked to them. We said, you know, what do you know about this? We got various perspectives, and we found they were all agreeing, so we were like okay, this is the way to go. We do that with multiple things. We have a lot of scholars who work directly for us, as well. They do some of the things on their end. They don't work directly for us, they're freelance writers, that's the way I should put it. We have these various friends and colleagues all over that we ask stuff of—"What about this? What do you know about this various thing?" What do you know about skeletal remains, or sheparding, or whatever it would be. We of

course have tons of scholarly resources at our fingertips from working for Logos Bible Software and having these 9,000 books at our fingertips. But we also go beyond that when we need to. We'll go look it up, and we'll also ask people for an opinion. We're hoping to expand that even more in the future. Micheal Heiser is a Ph.D., so he's part of our peer review process, of course.

Steve: John, launching any magazine carries significant financial risk. What will success look like for *Bible Study Magazine*?

John: Well *Bible Study Magazine* is a success, actually. That's part of what's amazing about us, is that we are a publication that's in our third issue, we're about to launch our fourth on Monday, and we are already successful. We're actually a profitable publication, which is amazing for a brand new publication. You know, with having upwards of 11,000 subscribers here, and it's something we had hoped for and worked towards. We wanted to see it happen. To me, though, success will be when we're really big. That's my goal. I want to see us be a 100,000 subscriber magazine, and that's what I work towards. I spend a lot of time working with partners and whatnot to try to get us out there and get exposure, and get people interested in us.

Steve: And how's your web site going fit into there? Many magazines' web sites have interactive features and whatnot. Do you have plans in that regard?

John: Yeah, we actually do have interactive features on our web site, a lot of interactive features. Biblestudymagazine.com is our web site. In fact, we do all of our subscriptions through Biblestudymagazine.com. Most magazines send out business reply cards and things like that, but that's an extremely expensive process. We knew our audience was tech-savvy. A lot of people we were reaching right away because they own Logos Bible Software, but there's this whole other group of people that were like, "Well let's see how it goes with them." We started to get exposure there, and it's worked. Doing subscriptions through Biblestudymagazine.com and just that alone, or calling our 1-800 number here at Logos, that's where we've done our subscriptions. It's been primarily through the web site. To do that, we have a lot of interactive features, and two hopes. One is we want to offer more to the world, as far as Bible study goes. So we have the Canon chart I was mentioning is completely interactive online. You can hover your mouse over it, you see these cool little pop-ups that give you the notes, pop-ups in the sense of a mouse hover, not a pop-up screen. Then we also have our Ten Commandments chart. We've recently launched one on Sennacherib's invasion of Judea in 701 B.C., which was an ongoing three-part article in our magazine by Dr. Craig Broyles. So we offer all these cool interactive things online, and part of what that does is get people to our web site, it gets people looking. We also do a lot of online promos, which has really been successful for us. Mark Driscoll, who was our cover story in the March/April issue, we did a promo

with his book *Vintage Church*. We did a promo with Cutlass, we gave away a free mp3 of their new song, the Christian rock band Cutlass. So we do lots of stuff like that, as well, to get web traffic going. For us, our marketing end of it has been focused on the internet. Biblestudymagazine.com will continue to be a better web site. We're working on redesigns and adding things to it all the time. It's something we focus as much time as we can on it. Obviously, we're very busy with other things, too. But we spend as much time as we can there, trying to get good stuff up there for people, and trying to allow a broader focus.

Steve: Well John Barry, thank you very much for being my guest today. I'm afraid we're out of time. It's been great having you as my guest today on Periodical Radio.

John: Okay, well I appreciate it, and just so everyone can know, you can subscribe at Biblestudymagazine.com if you're interested.

Steve: Very good. It's \$14.95 a year, correct?

John: \$14.95 a year, almost 50% off the cover price.

Steve: Thank you for listening to Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

33: *Columbia* [County New York] *Paper*

Interview with Publisher and Editor Parry Teasdale, April 2009

A periodical is a publication that comes out in successive parts, intended to be published indefinitely. Until today, my guests on Periodical Radio have been editors of popular magazines and scholarly journals. I'm delighted today to expand the scope of Periodical Radio to another type of periodical, the newspaper. My guest is Parry Teasdale, former editor of the recently folded *Columbia Independent*. The newspaper was run by the Journal Register Company, which filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in February 2009. Parry is making an independent effort to give Columbia County, New York, its own weekly newspaper in the traditional print-on-paper format. The *Columbia Paper* just published its second issue. The survival of news organizations is a topic that has recently received a great deal of media attention, so it's a treat to interview Parry Teasdale, who has a wealth of experience in the newspaper business.

Steve: Parry, welcome to Periodical Radio. Let's begin by having you sketch the story of the demise of the *Columbia Independent*. Why did the Journal Register Company decide to end it?

Parry: I can't speak for the Journal Register Company, and I don't pretend to. I think clearly they were in financial problems, and they decided, based on some sort of formula or policy, to close papers that they felt were not performing to the extent that they wanted. By performing, clearly we mean producing the revenue that they were looking for. I think on a larger scale, based on the company's subsequent bankruptcy, it showed that they had some real fundamental problems. Those were clear because they'd been chronicled in the press for some time. The newspaper industry in general was suffering from a loss of display advertising revenue, and still is of course right now. The real problem has been that they've found no way to replace that, and no way to stem the losses. But Journal Register Company had been on an acquisition, if not binge, at least an excursion into buying more newspapers from the time it started in the 1990's right through the early or mid-2000's. They made a bet, basically, on papers in Michigan. I don't know how you feel about the future of Michigan as an economic driver, even back in 2004, but the company decided it was going to go deeply into debt to buy a chain of newspapers, and they did. Of course the economy turned sour, and Michigan was particularly hard hit. Basically what happened is like a lot of newspaper chains, the Journal Register Company found itself tremendously in debt with really no revenue stream that could service the debt. The banks finally called the loans, basically, and decided they would do it through "forbearance" and let the loans go for a while. But in any case, for a while Journal Register Company was really the poster child for the whole industry, and there was a lot of speculation whether it would be the first company to go bankrupt that owned a chain of newspapers. But then Sam Zell stepped in and made

Journal Register look like a bunch of pikers when he bought the Tribune Company and threw it into bankruptcy a year later. So Journal Register kind of faded because it was a much smaller chain. In the meantime, they had daily newspapers that were probably, and still are, producing revenue. But the question is, could the weeklies (or as they call them non-dailies, because we publish twice a week) contribute to that. I think they made a fundamental miscalculation, but we could go there. Basically that's what led up to it. It was clear the company was in trouble, but it was not clear how much trouble it was in or how they would choose to resolve it. One of the ways they chose to resolve it was to close a lot of small newspapers, mostly non-dailies. There were a couple of dailies in Connecticut that they threatened to close, and they found an angel to buy them. But they didn't find any angels for the *Independent*.

Steve: And why have you decided to launch the *Columbia Paper*?

Parry: The *Columbia Paper* is an idea that basically coalesced in my mind as the Journal Register Company's fortunes sank. But I didn't do anything about it, because I felt that I wanted to be loyal to the Journal Register Company. They were paying my salary, and I liked what I was doing at the *Independent*. I did register a domain name the last day before they actually closed. We didn't know until the day they were shutting down the paper that was actually what was going to happen. In fact, that morning, I guess it was February 5, 2009, the publisher, who was relatively new, came down the steps from his office upstairs and said, "You've done a good job, but the Company's in financial trouble, and so finish the paper you're doing, go home, and don't come back." I'm paraphrasing there, but in any case everybody was laid off, and everybody, it was over 20 people, they closed it down. At that point, I had the day before registered the *Columbia Paper* name as a domain name on the web. The more I thought about it, clearly the web is still, or even generally digital, is not a way to support yourself unless you're Google. So you had to find a way to function to do news. I was very committed to doing local news for this community, which is Columbia County [New York]. I decided the way to do it, and the only model to do it would be through display advertising, and the only way you can do that is with ink on dead trees on countertops. So that's the decision that we made to go ahead and do it. A lot of people who'd worked for the *Independent* were very eager to become a part of that effort, and they've really volunteered a lot of time, especially to keep the web site going. The web site was up and going with local news in less than a week after the *Independent* was closed. In ten weeks, we put a newspaper on the stands in Columbia County, and we just finished our second edition.

Steve: Is display advertising the only reason to have a print newspaper, or are there additional important reasons for doing that?

Parry: When you look at Columbia County in particular, and perhaps upstate New York in general--I can't speak beyond the bounds of what I know of in the market--you see a

skewed older demographic, and you see a lot of rural areas, and Columbia is primarily rural, where broadband access is limited. Now when you combine those two factors, you say, How do people get their news?" It becomes problematic to deliver it. You can't deliver it through sophisticated digital services, because they simply don't exist. There's lots of places in Columbia County where you can't even get mobile phone service or cell service. And there are lots of places and lots of people who have only dial-up access to the web. So that makes the web not very functional. The radio market is extremely fractured. There are daily newspapers coming out of Albany, out of Poughkeepsie, out of Pittsfield, and there is a daily paper in the city of Hudson. But they don't reach county wide. What I've perceived in my time here is that there is a county wide market, there's a county wide identity beyond market only aspects. People understand that they live in Columbia County, and they're eager for news about what's going on in their county. There's no more practical way at this point to deliver news and information, which includes advertising, to this large group of people than a print newspaper. Part of that is also the business of being older. People who are older are more likely to be habituated to reading newspapers, and to be newspaper friendly and newspaper receptive. Where as you move to a skewed younger demographic, that's a harder sell.

Steve: In one of the pieces Chris Churchill wrote about your *Columbia Paper* in the *Albany Times Union*, he quoted you, "People don't realize how expensive it is to produce and distribute real news." What do you mean by "real news," and why is it expensive to produce?

Parry: There's no algorithm that gives you news. You can aggregate news with an algorithm, with a computer program. You can go out and grab the news from other sources. But actually collecting the news, by which I mean you interview people, the practicalities of journalism, where you make judgments about what's important and what's not. Then you present them in a narrative form. That's a function that we haven't figured out how to computerize. Some people have tried to make it work offshore, and I don't know whether they've been particularly successful in that, but I do know those efforts have gone on. But in terms of actually doing it, it takes human beings. Once you begin to employ a lot of human beings in any sort of endeavor, whether it's manufacturing or news gathering, then that becomes expensive, because you have to pay them. You can amortize the cost of equipment, you can't amortize the cost of human beings, and you need human beings to collect news, and you need smart human beings to collect news. And you need human beings who are actually interested in gathering the news, and have a sustained interest and commitment to doing that. Those individuals are not always easy to come by. There may be more now with so many people being laid off from news organizations, but still it's a special group of people who are professionally nosy, and you need to find those people and cultivate them and support them and you need to pay them.

Steve: So far, in the first two issues, the *Columbia Paper* is a volunteer effort, correct?

Parry: No, the *Columbia Paper* as distinguished from columbiapaper.com, which was and has been a volunteer effort, the *Columbia Paper* is paying people. It's not paying them much. We simply can't. But we are paying people. I believe that if we're collecting revenue for a newspaper, then we need to share that revenue with the people who make it possible.

Steve: The newsstand price is \$1, correct?

Parry: Correct.

Steve: Where does that money go? I mean, if you envision that as a pie, what are the slices of the pie, and how large is each slice?

Parry: Well, I think it's a moving target right now, because we're really just getting started. But certainly personnel, the contributors and all the people who deliver the paper and make it possible, and all the people, again, it's a hard number to pin down, because people come and go because they have lives and have to support themselves. Paying people is well over half of whatever the expense is. The printing, whereas it's not cheap, it's not the largest expense to do a newspaper. What we're trying to do is make every issue pay for itself. Now there are certainly variations in that, because the newspaper business is cyclical annually. You find in the winter and at the very end of the summer, there's very little advertising business. People are regrouping after Christmas in the winter. They're getting ready for the fall and the Christmas season in the late summer, so the retail advertisers and display advertisers are less involved in the paper. Those economics dictate certain adjustments over the year. But basically, on an average, every newspaper issue has to pay for itself. We can't build the costs in that make that impossible to do. We have to keep a cost structure that makes it possible to do.

Steve: The stores that sell the paper get some . . .

Parry: They get a percentage, a small percentage, but a percentage of the take of the newspaper, I mean of the cover cost of the newspaper. Then it makes it worth it to them. There are two advantages to stores. One is that they get a percentage of the cost, which they should, obviously, and secondly because it draws people into their establishment. If you're a convenience store, and in several places I can think of in the county, there are two and sometimes three convenience stores or similar businesses at the same intersection. You need a reason for people to come into your store. If they know you're carrying a newspaper that they want, then they're more likely to buy coffee and gas and treats or whatever, lottery tickets, at your store than the neighbor's store, which may offer similar services. We want to be in those stores, because people are looking to go there, and that's a reason to bring them in. So that's another thing we offer to the retailers.

Steve: Historically, local newspapers have played a very important role in sustaining an informed citizenry, which of course is essential for democracy to thrive. Do you think much about that historical context of what you're doing with the *Columbia Paper*?

Parry: I think we need to keep that in perspective, because as you know and probably people listening to this know, the freedom of the press that was written into the First Amendment was not the press that we know today. It was not the *New York Times* or even the *Columbia Paper*. It was pamphleteers, it was people who were saying horrible things about each other and political figures of the time, and who were challenging the King of England and the British with screeds that wouldn't classify as news today at all. It was that kind of really almost outrageous speech that our founding fathers really wanted to protect. We have in some ways toned that down, and made it into a business, and I don't even know that it was even a business back then. I don't claim to be a historian of the press. But I keep in mind that the press is not some fixed thing, and that the concept of what the press is is not final. It's an evolving concept. I don't think that the news as it was delivered in the late eighteenth century or early nineteenth century was better or worse, I just think it was different. I think what we'll find in the next decades, and maybe even sooner, is that news and the presentation of news will evolve into something different from what we know today, and what we think of the news as it was depicted in movies and popular culture and television, and existed in the twentieth century and early twenty-first century. It's changing, and it's changing more rapidly than it has in the past, and that's disruptive. But I don't appropriate to what we're doing some sort of grand principle that is immutable. I think that we do need to be responsible, because I think that's what I believe and we believe as we're doing it, our audience wants. But I don't think that's the only definition of the press, and I don't think that's the only definition that's going to drive the future growth of the information industry and the information business, because that's really what we're in. We want people to trust us as a source of information, so therefore we want to be worthy of that trust. But that's really how I look at it, rather than trying to pick a fixed style or set of values that defines the press.

Steve: Do you know, is your independent effort to make sure your community has its own newspaper unusual, or is the same thing going on other places nationwide?

Parry: I don't have nationwide figures, and the one case study that I've followed is the papers that Journal Register Company (JRC) threatened to close, and then were saved at the last minute in Connecticut. And they did close some papers, and there were at least two papers that opened in the wake of the closures by JRC in Connecticut. I think that a lot of people have realized, well some people, let's amend that, have realized that the JRC, like a lot of corporations, now I don't want to single out JRC as a particularly egregious case, because I don't know them to be that, but I think they didn't really understand what non-daily newspapers, community newspapers were all about. I think

that was a myopia that affected the industry as a whole. They had kind of a skewed notion, and we could go into that if it interests you. But basically I think it will happen, because people in certain communities will understand that there are opportunities for properly scaled, responsive community news organizations to deliver the news through a printed product for at least the near future. That may change in the very near future. But I think for the next few years, especially as you look at more rural communities and communities that are skewed older like ours, that is a particularly desirable audience for a newspaper, and it seems to be supportive. It seems to be an audience that advertisers still want to reach. So all those things I think say yes, it probably is happening nationwide. It's happening on a case by case basis. But I can't really give you the figures, other than this anecdotal evidence from Connecticut. I would say also in Dutchess County where the JRC owned a string of newspapers called the Taconic papers, they all closed down, and I think there was one also in Putnam County. A number of small papers have sprung up or are about to spring up in that area, because those communities now have no local newspaper. So there are efforts. People besides me see the opportunity and they're seizing it. It goes from very wealthy people to people like me, who just think it needs to be done.

Steve: A few months ago for Periodical Radio, I interviewed David Schimke of *Utne Reader*. During the interview he expressed an opinion that independent news organizations like *Utne Reader* may need to go to a non-profit foundation model. And on a related note the *Christian Science Monitor* has just recently switched from being a daily newspaper to being a weekly in print and then daily online. That one is underwritten by the Church of Christ, Scientist to the tune of \$12 million a year. Do you think that a non-profit foundation model might be the way for many or most newspapers to go?

Parry: I think it was Mort Zuckerman talking with Charlie Rose on his Public Television show, and Charlie Rose raised that issue with Zuckerman, who's the publisher of the Daily News. Zuckerman said, "I'll be the second one to do it." I think that's really the, um, we're all kind of waiting to see. Could that be the model? I'm skeptical, because I think that there's something inherently different about delivering the news as a kind of thoughtful after product of once the news has happened, different from, say, radio. Now we have an example of a very successful public radio station, WAMC, and full disclosure, I'm on the roundtable every few weeks talking about local news with them, and I've had a long term relationship in that regard with the station. But by any measure, a station that can go on the air in Albany, NY and simply ask people for support and receive \$800,000 within less than a week, three times a year, plus all its corporate underwriting, is by that measure very, very successful. I think that's due to lots of factors, and I don't need to analyze that, other than to say that's one way to go. There's certainly *Mother Jones* as another example of non-profit. I think that's a way that some publications will support themselves. But I don't see the model yet, and I'm not willing

to wait around for the model to exist to take advantage of it. The better approach is to say, let's see if we can use what the large corporations couldn't work to their advantage, and repackage that in a different way from a business sense and make it work. Because I believe that small business and entrepreneurial spirit is an important aspect of what this country's all about, and why not give it a try. If in the end it doesn't work, then we try something else. I still think the community deserves to have good accurate reporting about it. By good I mean fair, and as comprehensive as it can possibly be, and to have a forum to discuss various community issues, and that's another thing a newspaper can provide. So all those things that I say, yeah, maybe it will work. Maybe it will work better in a digital world. I don't know. But I don't want to wait for that to happen, and it isn't happening with the exception of those rare instances that you mentioned, and maybe *Mother Jones* and a few others. That's great if they can transport that model and make it more generally available to people. Not even available, but functional, to make it actually work. Well that's great. I would love to do that. But I also think there's another thing about it. We're in the midst of a very serious recession, if not the verge of a depression, and we need local business to survive. We don't have a better cultural model for supporting our society. If local businesses don't have a platform to project their message, and that's advertising. I'm not making any bones about it. If they don't have a way to put that advertising out, how are they going to get the word out? WAMC is actually talking of having its underwriters talk directly to the public. That's a form of . . . it isn't advertising because it's public radio, and okay we can debate the difference of that . . . but basically that's not available to all the local businesses. Or if it is, it doesn't serve their needs if they have a sale that's coming up or something like that. Really, even though we've got to change our habits as consumers, we really also need to know what advertisers are offering. Sometimes we need to buy things, whether it's something to make our homes function or our lives better or we need to know the services of whatever, from doctors to lawyers to anything else. Newspapers can provide that as well. I don't mean to suggest that it's a wonderful holy crusade to deliver advertising. But it's a business, and businesses are an important part what we do. They employ people, they give people jobs, and if we don't have a way to get their message out, then they suffer. Again, I'm not just saying that we're some sort of non-profit service for businesses, we profit from that, too. But in the process of doing that, we want to hire people, we want to create jobs, as well. So there's a symbiotic relationship that goes on there, and it always is problematic in terms of the ethical issues and the distinction between news and advertising and those kinds of things. Those are issues that should be explored constantly. But I think that's part of the picture, to say, "Hey let's not ignore the fact that part of the message of a newspaper is the advertising." That's very important to a lot of people in ways that not everybody considers. It's not just important to the advertisers.

Steve: Parry, we just have a minute or two left. In conclusion, I'd like to ask whether you have any advice for young people interested in careers in journalism?

Parry: I think the best thing I can say to young people is know something, and know something about storytelling, as well. Those are the two things. There was a recent article about how journalism schools should teach more about storytelling. But I think it's really important that young people who are thinking about journalism understand there are fundamentals. There are real practical aspects to grasp. But they also need to have a wider interest than just journalism, because they'll know then what other people who have wider interests are thinking about and how they came to it. So journalism alone is a very good trade, but knowing something, learning something, having a passion about something is equally important, and I would encourage people to do it. I don't think journalism is dead, but it's going through a very painful transition, and it will be difficult to find jobs for a while. I think ultimately people who are good at telling stories and who are accurate and fair and have some grasp of the principles will thrive.

Steve: Parry Teasdale, thank you very much for being my guest on Periodical Radio.

Parry: Well, thank you for inviting me.

Steve: The printed *Columbia Paper* is only available in stores in its home county in upstate New York. The online version is at <http://www.columbiapaper.com/>. Thank you for listening to Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.

34: The Rejected Quarterly

Interview with Editor Daniel Weiss, July 14, 2009

The topic of this installment of Periodical Radio is *The Rejected Quarterly*, a unique literary magazine. Quoting from their home page, the magazine accepts “Fiction that doesn’t fit anywhere else. To 8,000 words. All fiction submitted must be accompanied by at least 5 rejection slips (Xeroxes okay.) *The Rejected Quarterly* desires stories that are as unique as possible. We want unusual stories, but high quality writing and a story to tell and/or a coherent idea/ideas to express are the most important criteria. We will consider just about any type of story, but remember, we are looking for originality.” End quote <<http://www.rejectedq.com/page2.html>>. The magazine also includes poems about rejection, reproductions of rejection slips, and stories about the experience of being rejected.

My guest is co-founder and editor of *The Rejected Quarterly*, Daniel Weiss.

Steve: Dan, welcome to Periodical Radio.

Dan: Thank you, it’s great to be here.

Steve: Dan, in my brief introduction, I quoted some of the author’s guidelines from your home page to let our listeners know the basic concept of *The Rejected Quarterly*. But tell us more. Why did you launch the magazine, and what are its guiding principles?

Dan: Well I launched it--it was an idea in my head for a long time, actually. At one point I did a prototype in pen by hand, kind of as something to show friends. Then the motivation was being a writer myself, getting rejections, and the type of rejections I got. I kind of felt a sympathy for writers. What happened is, I had a few agents for novels, and I remember one particular novel of humorous speculative fiction. What happened is I’d get back these rejection slips forwarded by my agent from the publishers saying things like, “This is a really good story, it’s really funny, but there’s not much of a market for humorous speculative fiction right now.” I thought to myself, if they said the characters are not very developed, or the plot is too thin, that’s something I can work on. But if they say there’s not much of a market for it, there’s nothing I could do other than write for a particular market, which is not what I wanted to do. My view is that if I’m going to spend a long time writing, I want to write something I have some passion for. So my theory is that things are rejected often for ideas or reasons other than quality. And that’s the kind of rejections I was getting often. Not always, but often. So that’s why I launched the magazine, to give people who write good stories that don’t happen to sit anywhere a place to publish.

Steve: Just to clarify, this is a literary magazine. You don't have anything to do with scholarly journal articles, research articles that are rejected by scholarly journals. That's separate from what you do.

Dan: That's different, yes. This is strictly for fiction, except for rejection related poetry, and we have a column, "The Art of Rejection" about literary rejection. But other than that it's all fiction.

Steve: Do you alone make all the editorial decisions for *The Rejected Quarterly*?

Dan: Not alone. Jeff Ludecke is my co-editor. He usually reads all the stories as well as I, and we usually come to a decision together.

Steve: Now for the stories, they have to be accompanied by five rejections, is that correct?

Dan: That's correct.

Steve: Why five?

Dan: Well, it's kind of an arbitrary number. We want to have some standards, because otherwise people can just say, "Oh, this has been rejected." That's not good enough. People have to include the slips. If you just get rejected once or twice, that could just be that magazine doesn't have room at the time. But when you get five, you've proved that it's going to be tough to place. Of course you can get twenty, but it becomes tough, and it becomes unwieldy to send in twenty. I can only print a representative number, anyway. I can't print all five, we don't have enough room. Five just seemed like a good number.

Steve: How often do you reject submissions? You don't accept everything that comes in with five rejections, right?

Dan: No. Unfortunately all the time. Even in our magazine, only a small number of submissions get published. That's been one of the enlightening and interesting things about being on the other side. I never imagined myself as an editor. I still consider myself a writer. I have to reject things, and I have to admit that one of the things I've found is that a lot of things do get rejected for quality issues. I get a lot of things that make me wonder why people send them out. We also get a lot of things that are just very well written, and you can't understand why they weren't published.

Steve: So speak now to budding writers. We hope here at the College of Saint Rose to have a lot of our own students listening to this program. For an aspiring writer, based on your experience, what would be some of the advice you would give them?

Dan: I would say use your own voice. Don't be afraid of being different or unique. I don't think it pays to try to cash in on any trends. People tend to want to follow that vampire stories are in, or historical fiction, or whatever it is. I don't think you need to write for those areas. Use your own voice, don't be afraid to be different. It's okay and positive to stand out. Look over your work. Read it out loud. I think that's a key. When you read out loud you can tell if the dialogue sounds natural. Once you've read it out loud and you're happy with it, I think that's the key.

Steve: What are some legitimate reasons for rejecting submissions? I mean more broadly, beyond the *The Rejected Quarterly*. What are some of the legitimate reasons why submissions are rejected? You mentioned a few, but could you expound on that a little bit?

Dan: From my experience, a lot of it is people not taking the time to really edit their work. It may seem great as a first draft, read over once. Expounding on the advice you asked me to give, put it aside for a little while, then read it again, at least a week or two later, maybe a little more. Sometimes people turn in stories to me with bad continuity. Things happen in the end that don't follow what happened earlier. There's often--I'm not talking necessarily for an English class--there's grammar that just doesn't work. You often have dialogue that doesn't sound real at all. For me, those are the big issues. The story has to seem real, and for that to happen characters have to talk like they're human beings, and you have to view them as individuals, not as mouthpieces for the author. For me that's a big one. I see a lot of those kinds of stories.

Steve: What about really basic things like spelling and punctuation?

Dan: Once in a while. A lot of manuscripts have a misspelled word here or there or a little bit of punctuation. If it's really bad obviously I'll edit that. But every once in a while you'll see someone who doesn't have a command of it. It's not that common, but right away you start thinking, "Why did this person send this in?" It should have been proofread. If the author doesn't have those skills, then have someone else read it who does. Because that kind of a thing just stands out, it's something that makes you . . . the story would have to be very strong to get by that sort of thing. It just seems amateurish.

Steve: Let's turn to the rejections themselves now, and the art, let's say, of rejection. You've seen a lot of rejection slips from your authors, so is it fair to say that you're something of an expert on rejection notices?

Dan: I think that's fair to say.

Steve: What are some the characteristics of a good rejection, a legitimate one?

Dan: One characteristic is a personal note sent to you from the editor. It's true that that's not always possible, and it's true even for myself. You get so many manuscripts, and you only have so much time, and to spend as much time as each manuscript deserves isn't always possible. But I will say that for me, the more well written the story is, if I can't use it, it may be really well written but there's something about the story that didn't quite click, or vice versa, the plot idea is great but there's something about the writing that's just not quite up to what I want, I'll endeavor to write a better rejection letter. It inspires you, actually, the writing. Otherwise, I always write something personal on every rejection slip. But that's different from writing a real letter or note. Any time you have a form rejection slip, no matter how well written it is, it just doesn't do it for the author who put so much work into this fiction, just hoping for so much, and then you get back a form letter that everybody gets. It just doesn't seem fair.

Steve: I was going to ask, how common in your experience these form rejections are. How many publishers and editors go that route?

Dan: Oh, probably eighty or ninety percent are pure forms, maybe with a signature on the bottom, or "Thanks" or "Sorry" or one word. But basically they're all forms. Then I would say the next step up would be the magazines that use a format that looks like it's a real note written to you. It has your name and it has your story's name in it. But then it will have something like "This story just doesn't grab me" or "Alas, it just didn't work for me" or variations on that that I see time and again from the same magazines. There may be a few words changed, but they're basically the same thing. Or you get these form rejections with check boxes, where they'll check a box off about why they rejected it—the plot, or the grammar, too cliché, whatever it is. Sometimes they'll have a few lines written underneath it explaining why they ticked that box. Of course anything that you get that's personal and pertains to your story directly is an improvement over a form.

Steve: And a good rejection would also address the content, and not say just because the market doesn't sell this right now, is that your point of view?

Dan: From my point of view. But it's just like refrigerators. We went looking at refrigerators, and I say well, this Amana, Kenmore, Whirlpool, Maytag, it's all the same company, basically. It's the same with the books now. If you have somebody in the corporate office saying this is what you need to do, the editor really can't do much more than say that, although they could address the writing and say why they liked it and express sympathy. But if that's their criteria, that's their criteria. And often more and more editors don't have the freedom to actually decide for themselves.

Steve: Is it a threat to good literature that it's become so corporate, and the independent publishing houses are having such a tough time surviving? I know for magazines and

books, too, that the independents are having a bit of a tough time. Is that a threat to the genre of literature?

Dan: I think it is. It's the same with the consolidation of the large chain bookstores. It's not that they're bad, but the more choices you have, the better. The more editors you have, the more independence, the more points of view you have. Even if you have a large company that let's say has consolidated five or six book companies, even if the large company is enlightened and gives the editor full choice, and even if the editor is a good editor and well meaning and does do a good job, you still have their one point of view instead of the six different points of view you had when it was six companies. I think that can be dangerous. It's definitely limiting. It tends to make for sameness, and it tends to make for trends that everybody tries to jump on the bandwagon. It's like TV or sitcoms where you have to appeal to millions, and it's becoming that way with books. You have to appeal to such a large audience that it waters down, I think, what we're reading.

Steve: You're fully independent, right? I mean the *The Rejected Quarterly* is your baby, and you're not answering to any corporate

Dan: No, that's right.

Steve: What are the pros and cons of that for you?

Dan: Well, mostly they're pros. The pros are that it's the way I've always viewed my writing. Writing to me is fun but it's hard work. It's time consuming. I don't see the point of doing it if I'm taking orders from somebody. I could do it as a job, but I'd rather do other things. It's the same with editing. If I'm taking direction, that's a type of job that's not necessarily bad, but it's not what I'm looking for. I'm looking to make decisions in my writing and my editing. The cons are, and it's a big con, is the money. I can't support myself by it, obviously, so it becomes harder to do because after work I'm often tired, and there's only so much time and energy. So there are definite cons to it, also.

Steve: So this is kind of the classic kitchen table publication, that's just what people call it, where you don't go to some big corporate office or something, you're producing it on your own.

Dan: Right. My office right now is a glorified closet, actually.

Steve: When you're independent and haven't gone into a lot of debt to do this and all that sort of thing, is the challenge more the time rather than the lack of money that comes in from it?

Dan: Well the challenge is the time, and the time to do it right, and to get it out in at least a somewhat timely fashion. I'm the only one who sets the deadlines, but still it needs to

be out in a fairly timely manner or it loses value for subscribers or bookstore or libraries, so it needs to have that. The time is the biggest issue for me. That relates to quality. I want to have time to read everything carefully and do my columns well and research interviews. If I'm interviewing somebody, I want to know who I'm interviewing. I may have read some books by them, but I want to be as well versed as I can. It all takes quite a bit of time. Yeah, that's the huge issue. I haven't had to go into debt for it, but you know I do invest in it. I love doing it or I wouldn't still be doing it. I started in August 1998 as far as making a real publication. The con of being independent like this has to do with the consolidation of bookstores. I can't get into the large chains. Independents are very open to taking *The Rejected Quarterly*, but every issue it always seems I have to replace one or two because they're going out of business. I'm in kind of a catch-22 situation because I'm not large enough. There are small press distributors who would be happy to take it, but once the bookstore takes a cut and if I'm mailing them, and then if the distributor takes a cut, I'm losing so much money the more stores I get into, the more in debt I'd go into. It has to be small, it has to be myself calling all the bookstores independently and dealing with them directly. Sometimes they don't want to do that, they want to deal with one distributor.

Steve: Do you have a lot of individual subscribers?

Dan: Not a lot, but I have some that go all the way back to when we started. We get new ones. They're pretty loyal. The people who subscribe usually stay subscribers. I don't get out as much as I used to, but I do a book fair or two a year, and try to get exposure that way.

Steve: That was the next thing I wanted to ask about, how you get exposure and get the word out. So there are book fairs, and calling bookstores. What other things can you do as an independent magazine publisher to get the word out?

Dan: We're listed in *Novel and Short Story Writer's Market*, and listed in numerous online writers' listings. You know, when I first started out, I went to as many as I could find, and listed the guidelines. A lot of others pick it up from those. It's gotten a lot of exposure that way, in some of the small press writer's guides, and book fairs. For a while, especially in the beginning when I had a lot of speculative fiction stories I went to a few science fiction conventions where they had a room where people sold books and things like that. I'm involved in a combined book exhibit at the ALA [American Library Association] convention for libraries. I'm with EBSCO so institutions can subscribe that way. A lot of it takes time, and it depends on how much time I have to pursue that.

Steve: Let me just interject real quickly to explain to listeners that EBSCO is a company that keeps a catalog of all magazines that are available that libraries can order through, so it facilitates ordering.

Dan: Right.

Steve: Just for the record, so folks know what EBSCO is.

Dan: That's pretty much it.

Steve: How much of a market is there for the back issues, versus current subscriptions? What's the mix there?

Dan: More for current subscriptions and more for the current issue. When I go to book fairs, that's when the back issues usually sell, when people are there in person. For whatever reason, they flip through it and see a certain article or feature or the cover. They might like the cover and take that one, and just buy one issue. Or they're ask me for a recommendation. That's where the back issues usually go. Sometimes people write in wanting the back issue with the interview with so-and-so or something like that. But the people who order single copies online are people who are writers and want to see if it's some place they want to display their writing, or if their writing will fit into it. So some don't really care which issue they have.

Steve: Let's turn back away from the business end of it to the rejections themselves. You've seen a lot of rejection slips over the years. Can you share a few of your favorites with us?

Dan: Oh, sure. There's one from this issue I thought was pretty amusing. It starts off, "Dear Scott, by the time you read this, your manuscript will have already been rejected. There's no sense in asking me why or what you could have done differently, because I've already moved on to other stories. It wasn't you. It was me. I . . . ah, who am I kidding? It was partly you. You didn't make me feel like you were really interested in making this relationship work. I didn't feel any sparks between us. You didn't make me laugh. This story wasn't a match made in heaven, but the next one may be. Submit again. If you don't, you'll regret it. Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but soon, and for the rest of your life." I think there was a postscript that said "P.S. I'm keeping the ring."

Steve: [laughs]

Dan: Of course that's humorous, but the writer expressed to me that he wasn't at all amused by it. I'll read some that are pretty insulting, actually. "I don't care if you waste your time, but why don't you stop wasting mine. You are a poseur, not a poet." Here's another one. "This submission is so bad that it's not worth wasting paper to respond to." That was written on the back of the person's self addressed stamped envelope. "You must drink lots of strong coffee in order to stay awake long enough to arrange these things that literate kids abandon when they stop playing with asphalt blocks." Here's one. "No doubt

you're very sincere in what you're doing, but for my money, there's no more relationship to poetry than to frying eggs or taking part in round the world skateboard races." Here's one that says, "You are not a woman. This a by a woman. Sorry."

Steve: I wonder what they meant by that!

Dan: You know, I don't know [laughing]. I don't remember what the submission was. Let's see. "The ability to string words together into a comprehensible phrase or sentence is what distinguishes human beings from a dictionary and the lower animal forms. When you have reached that stage in your development, try us again." So when you get something like that, though you can say they're not forms, they're written to the author, but they're pretty insulting. "Thanks for submitting your work to us, but frankly I don't know what to do with it. If you write poetry, we'd love to see it." And that was for a poem.

Steve: So what's the healthy way for a writer to respond or react to rejection? I mean, no one likes to be rejected. So how should a writer respond? Let's assume it's one of the good ones. It's personal and gives reasons for rejecting it. What's the best way to respond?

Dan: Well, if it's a rejection that actually gives ideas, and I've had a few of those, and I guess I've written a few of those, then I think the best thing to do if you agree with it is to take that to heart and to apply it, if not to that story and resubmit (I actually had someone do that and I accepted a story that way) or to just apply it to your next story if you want to move on. If there's not direct advice, but they're rejecting it with an encouraging letter, the best thing to do is take heart. People have enjoyed it and expressed that they've liked the humor, or writing, or whatever it is, so keep going. If it just says, "Sorry we can't use this, we don't have space because of so many submissions," it's pretty hard to take heart from that. I think you can use it as motivation, to say okay, I'm going to do something so good that nobody will reject it, or I'm just going to keep submitting until someone appreciates it. I think that's the attitude to have. If you really have worked on your story, and you really believe in it, then I think the attitude should be that the editor can't appreciate it. I don't mind if someone thinks that about me. People have different wavelengths. Sometimes something doesn't click with one person but it clicks with another. If one editor doesn't like it, that doesn't mean that the next one won't. In fact, in this newest issue, there was an interview with Daniel Pinkwater, and I thought he expressed that attitude really well. He said, "I've always assumed that anyone rejecting my work is jealous or ignorant and to be pitied." I don't go that far in my attitude, but I think it's healthy to believe in your work. It doesn't matter how successful or intelligent the editor is. If you believe in your work, you'll find a place. You'll find somebody who will publish it. In my case, sometimes I've turned to self publishing. There's university

presses. It depends on why you're trying to publish. If it's to make a lot of money, then your options are limited. If not, you can publish with a small press and perhaps not make money, but at least have your work in print.

Steve: Of course nowadays it's even easier to get the word out there if one publishes online. Do you intend to continue *The Rejected Quarterly* as a printed publication? If so, why? Why not just go online?

Dan: Well, you know, I'm a traditionalist. I'm kind of old fashioned. I like the print. I'm online every day, so it's not like I don't use the new technology. I love it. But I like something about paper. I like a newspaper, I like paperback or hardback books. I like a print magazine. I don't find myself going online and reading entire publications. I'll go online to read an article or a story, but I won't read a newspaper, say. Or I won't read a book online. It's just not me. I'm publishing for people like that, I guess. I like a magazine, and I like something that you can hold in your hand and have and put on a shelf. Obviously there's a place for online, because that's the direction things are going. But I don't intend to go that way. I've been updating my web site for a long time, and I'll probably add some content to it. But I don't plan on doing an online publication. That's just not what I want to do.

Steve: Dan, thank you very much for being my guest on Periodical Radio. You've been a very interesting interviewee, and thanks for sharing your perspectives on rejections and aspects of having an independent publication.

Dan: Well thanks for having me, it's been a lot of fun.

Steve: A four issue subscription to *The Rejected Quarterly* is \$19.99 from Black Plankton Press, P.O. Box 1351, Cobb, CA, 95426. Thank you for listening to Periodical Radio. I'm your host, Steve Black.