

Editorial introduction

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The Leeds International Latin Seminar sponsored five volumes of papers (*PLLS* 6-10) between 1990 and 1998. The inauguration of the Leeds International Classics Seminar in 2001 provided an incentive to reconsider our publication plans. *Leeds International Classical Studies*, an open access electronic journal, is the fruit of that reflection.¹ This editorial introduction explains the thinking behind it, and outlines our—still tentative and evolving—plans for the future.

Open access publication

Academics write articles. Then they give them, usually for nothing, to publishers. Publishers make them more expensive, and sell them back to the academics, and to the universities who employ them. The universities thus pay twice: first they employ academics to write articles, then they buy the articles back from the publishers. In fact, the universities pay three times: having bought the articles they have to pay for space to contain, and staff to maintain, the library collections. Not surprisingly, the convergent pressures of shrinking budgets and escalating costs mean that library holdings are more and more selective. So it is less and less likely that a copy of the particular article you want to read will be available locally. Document supply services have been developed to solve this problem, but these too can be expensive to run.

Yet document supply need not any longer be expensive. If I put a document on the web, you can retrieve it and print it out in minutes at negligible cost. If we used the web as our publication medium, therefore, we could give our articles to each other, instead of giving them to publishers. With current technology, open access publication has become a feasible proposition.²

Electronic publication is not cost-free. The costs that have traditionally been loaded onto the user largely disappear; some of the saving is absorbed by infrastructure costs (networking, computers, printers), but the marginal cost of retrieving and printing a particular article is trivial. On the other hand, there are still costs associated with production, storage and distribution. Such costs are much lower than those incurred by printed publications; but in open access publications these costs are, by definition, no longer transferred to the user, and so have to be borne by the provider. An alternative to open access is to use subscription or access charges to recover the costs from readers. There are no doubt cases for which this model is appropriate (for example, a journal with a

¹ *PLLS* will continue as *Papers of the Langford Latin Seminar* of the Department of Classics, The Florida State University, Tallahassee.

² See, for example, the web-sites of the [Budapest Open Access Initiative](#), the [TEMPE Principles for Emerging Systems of Scholarly Publishing](#), [SPARC](#) (the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition), and [Create Change](#).

very high volume of submissions might need subscription income to cover the cost of administrative support). But there are drawbacks. Charges reduce the provider's incentive to be economical; they may limit the ease and breadth of the dissemination of the journal's contents; and they raise questions about the control of rights, since republication by the author threatens the electronic publisher's income. Moreover, even the simplest system for managing subscriptions and payment will add something to the total cost. Open access, therefore, even if it cannot be regarded as a universal norm might well serve as a benchmark against which the justification of access charges may be assessed and, perhaps, challenged. After all, if reciprocal open access were universally adopted, the costs incurred by each provider would be more than offset by the concurrent savings. We can surely think of better ways to spend the money that currently goes to support a complex and costly structure of intermediaries that technological change has made unnecessary.

Electronic publication

From the point of view of the scholarly community wanting articles to read, open access electronic publication has obvious advantages. It provides easy access to new research without placing additional strain on (personal or institutional) library budgets.

But there are advantages for authors, too, in electronic publication. The logistics of print publication impose many restrictions. Authors and editors have to work to production deadlines, but are also vulnerable to delays caused by tardy co-contributors or bottlenecks in the production process. Corrections are costly during production, and impossible afterwards. It may be difficult to find an outlet for very recondite or technical material, however good its scholarship. Economic considerations may dictate limits on length that conflict with the demands of the content. None of these rigidities need arise with an electronic journal. There is no need to wait for a complete volume-full of material, since contributions can be added to a web-site incrementally; this offers contributors the prospect of speedy publication, and—as a counterpart to that—frees them from the pressure to meet deadlines. Since the cost of publication is low there need be no arbitrary limits on length, and material with a limited potential readership need not be shunned. Contributions are also open-ended. When you see the published version of your work and realise with horror that you have written 'o' when you meant 'Constantinopolitanus', a simple remedy is available. 'Forthcoming' need no longer dangle for ever unresolved in bibliographies. To be sure, corrections to papers after publication must preserve stability of citation.³ Those who refer to your argument, for praise or blame, are entitled to be confident that readers who follow up the reference will be able to find the argument, and will find the same argument, that was cited. But more substantial additions or revisions to published

³ This stipulation applies to papers formally published in the regular series of *LICS* volumes. The *LICS* web-site will also host a less formal series of Discussion Papers, providing a facility by which work in progress can be made public in order to elicit feedback and debate. Discussion Papers may be withdrawn or revised without notice, and the contents of this section of the web-site should not be regarded as stable.

work could be made in the form of dated appendices at any later stage. Where better to correct the blunder at *AJP* 119 (1998) 95 than in a note attached to the article itself?⁴ And it is not only the individual article that is open-ended. Whereas a printed collection is a fixed and frozen resource, an electronic collection of papers can grow and become more valuable.

Concerns

Despite its apparent advantages, on-line publication raises a number of concerns. Are they well-founded?

Quality is one recurrent issue. The web has notoriously given an easy outlet for vast quantities of drivel. So is it wise to abandon the mechanisms by which conventional publications maintain quality control? Obviously not. But quality is not inherent in the medium of publication. It is achieved, when it is achieved, by the combined efforts of authors, referees and editors. That collaboration provides no guarantee—spectacular failures of quality control can be found even in leading refereed periodicals. But the involvement of a printer in the production process offers no additional safeguard at all (except in the sense that the high cost of conventional publication has tended to deter the uncommitted).

In reality, the concern about quality is more subtle. I know few people, if any, who admit to believing that work published electronically is inherently inferior; I know many more who are worried that other people may believe it. The problem, then, is less that electronic publication is perceived, however irrationally, as being qualitatively inferior, than that it is perceived as being perceived as inferior. Yet that is enough to create a reasonable concern on the part of potential contributors. Who would want to publish in an electronic journal if there is a risk that it will carry less weight in promotion decisions and research assessments than conventional publication? And this may, perversely, make a reality of the perception: for authors will then be reluctant to contribute their best work to electronic journals. The result is that academics who complain about the impact of budget cuts on periodical subscriptions, and about having to give away their copyright to commercial publishers, also fear that taking advantage of an obvious solution to both problems will work to their disadvantage in peer-review—in other words, that they will be penalised by other academics who suffer from the same problems. The individual's concern is, of course, entirely rational; what is irrational is the collective tangle of superstition and mutual distrust that gives rise to it.

Another concern that is often voiced is that electronic journals are less reader-friendly than print publications. Studying a long and complex article on screen is impossible; and material formatted for the web often looks terrible in print, to say nothing of the fact that everyone's print-out will have different pagination. That was once true. But anyone who reads this editorial, on screen or in print, will (I

⁴ I overlooked the evidence in schol. Aesch. 3.258 (552 Dilts) for the occurrence of προσωποποιία in Apsines *On Figures*; so the observation to which I then attached the proviso 'for what it is worth' was worth even less than I thought. But how is a reader of the original article going to become aware of a correction published here?

hope) agree that such problems have now been overcome. Those who do not read it probably do not care whether or not it is readable. Or perhaps they would care, if they knew that the resource existed. Or perhaps the problem is that they find electronic publications inaccessible. This leads us to some further concerns.

There are indeed obstacles to finding out about the existence and contents of electronic resources, but their days are surely numbered. The present transitional state is reflected in the seemingly paradoxical policy of *TOCSIN*, a valuable on-line bibliographical tool that does not index on-line publications, although it does give links to on-line versions of printed publications. *Revue ouverte en ligne* has recently begun to fill the gap; but the divide between printed and electronic resources makes little sense, and what is really needed is the integration of both formats in our standard bibliographical tools. It is good to see that in volume 70 (1999) *L'Année Philologique*, the greatest of all bibliographies in our discipline and itself now available on-line, has indexed the on-line journal *Histos* back to its launch in 1997.

The complaint that electronic publications are inaccessible sometimes arises from a reluctance to become familiar with the (very simple) technology involved. It is equally true that articles published in German are inaccessible to those who will not learn to read German. The solution is obvious in both cases. One can have more sympathy with those who have limited access to the necessary infrastructure. But if *LICS* were available only in printed form few individuals would buy it; readers would largely depend on access to institutional libraries. So if your institution's library does not make it as easy for you to download and print out an article from an open access electronic journal as it is to photocopy an article from a conventional journal, you should point out to the librarians how much money they stand to save by encouraging this mode of publication.

Conventional publication, in any case, does not guarantee ready access. Take a look at an issue of *Bursians Jahresbericht* from (say) the 1890s—if your library has it. How easy would it be to get copies of the publications listed there? From personal experience, I can assure you that in many cases it is not at all easy. An efficient inter-library loan service helps, but if and when the document arrives it may turn out to be irrelevant to your needs, or of very poor quality (despite having been published in print). Is it worth incurring the cost of conventional document supply speculatively? If it were an open-access electronic publication you could retrieve the item for evaluation quickly, and at no cost.

It is not only older printed material that can pose this kind of problem. Last summer I decided that I needed to read some of the papers in L. Calboli Montefusco (ed.), *Papers on Rhetoric III* (Papers on rhetoric 5, Bologna: Cooperativa libraria universitaria editrice Bologna (CLUEB). Università degli studi di Bologna, Dipartimento di filologia classica e medioevale, 2000). My University's library did not have a copy; no copy was listed in the British Library on-line catalogue or COPAC (the UK's on-line union catalogue); nor, indeed, was it listed by the Library of Congress. When I requested this book by inter-library loan—and after I had dispelled the British Library's not unreasonable suspicion that I was really asking for L. Calboli Montefusco (ed.), *Papers on Rhetoric*

(Papers on rhetoric 3, Bologna: Cooperativa libraria universitaria editrice Bologna (CLUEB). Università degli studi di Bologna, Dipartimento di filologia classica e medioevale, 1993)—a long wait began. Seven months elapsed in total between my first requesting the book and its arrival. If the collection had been published as an open access electronic resource, I could have got hold of the articles much sooner myself with minimal effort and at no cost.

Another concern is that electronic journals have tended to be ephemeral. This is not unique to electronic format: conventional journals sometimes fold, as well. It has been a good while since we last saw an issue of (say) *Museum philologum londiniense*. But the lower capital cost of launching an electronic journal has no doubt encouraged people to embark on such projects without sustainable commitment. And yet there is another, more positive, way of viewing this phenomenon. A new medium requires experiment: some of those experiments will fail, but if we waited until all the problems have been solved before we exploit the medium, we would never solve the problems. As for the future of *LICS*, needless to say we do not plan to be ephemeral. We hope that the association with an ongoing seminar will provide a stable platform for the new journal. In the longer term, we also aim to broaden the editorial base beyond Leeds, and to work collaboratively with colleagues at other universities; this, too, should help to ensure the project's continuity in the future.

A deeper concern than continuity of publication is the continuing availability of what has been published. If a conventional journal ceases publication its contents are still physically present in at least some libraries. A physical copy on a library shelf seems to have a more reliable future than a computer file that can be deleted from a disk, or simply not transferred to a new server when the system is upgraded. Moreover, the physical preservation of the file is of no use if the file format becomes obsolete; at some point, therefore, the file will need to be changed, and not just physically transferred. Electronic resources will require more active management than conventional publications if their continuing availability is to be ensured. This is a genuine concern, since the technical and organisational problems have not yet been solved. But there are considerations to be weighed on the other side. First, the tacit assumption that adding to paper archives will remain a viable strategy for ever is more than questionable: storage space is finite, and increasingly expensive. Secondly, there is the growing trend towards the digitisation of existing conventional collections: those who have created these resources will want to protect their investment, and thus have a stake in the establishment of international standards for the management of electronic archives. Finally, one might reflect on where we would be if our predecessors had taken the view that, though the book was a format with interesting possibilities, it was too risky to commit to it until the long-term archiving problem had been solved. Fortunately, people did not defer writing books until libraries had been established; libraries were established because there were books that people wanted to preserve. In the same way, the long-term solution to the problems of archiving electronic resources will be a consequence of the growth of electronic publishing, and should not be seen as its condition.

Basic principles

These considerations suggest a number of basic principles.

First, quality is crucial. The onus here is, of course, in the first instance on authors. But it also means that there must be firm editorial control, supported where appropriate by consultation with referees.

Secondly, the format must meet the needs of readers. It must be easy to produce a properly formatted printed version, with a stable pagination to facilitate citation; there must be no technical problems in displaying Greek and other special characters; any software required must be freely available and easy to install, and must not be restricted to a particular system. We believe that pdf (Adobe's Portable Document Format) meets all these requirements.

Thirdly, in order to maximise the collective advantage from the low cost of electronic publication, it should where possible be based on the open access model. We will be adopting this model for *LICS*—a fact that inevitably puts limits on the editorial resources available, and therefore on the quantity of material that we can realistically consider for publication.

Fourthly, since open access publishers have no commercial interests to protect, authors should retain the maximum possible control over their work. *LICS* will require from contributors nothing more than the grant of a non-exclusive but irrevocable world-wide licence to publish and disseminate an article, for the full term of the copyright in it. Because the license is irrevocable, contributions cannot be withdrawn after publication—a necessary stipulation, since the long-term stability of the journal's contents is crucial if it is to be cited. But authors retain all other rights in the content. In particular, because the license is non-exclusive, they are free to publish their work elsewhere in any format.

Finally, the publishers must recognise that they have a responsibility to ensure that their output will remain accessible in the long term. *LICS* will initially be storing papers as MS Word documents, and distributing them using Adobe Acrobat; the chances of such widely used formats being left behind in the near future are reassuringly slim. Looking further ahead, we gain some confidence from the supportive institutional environment provided by the [Scholarly Publication Forum](#) at the University of Leeds, and by the University's planned e-archive.

Editorial policy

Beyond these basic principles, the editorial policy of *LICS* will not be fixed rigidly from the start. We want to reserve for ourselves sufficient flexibility in our approach to enable us to take advantage of opportunities, and to meet scholarly publishing needs, that emerge over time. What follows is a summary of our starting-point.

LICS will have a thematic structure. It will be organised around a growing number of thematic clusters, in principle covering any aspect of Greek and Roman antiquity and of the history of the classical tradition. Most of these clusters will be

based on the themes of meetings of the Leeds International Classical Seminar (this is the case, for example, with the clusters on Lucretius and on Pastoral). However, *LICS* is not the proceedings of the Seminar, and its editorial process is separate from the organisation of Seminar meetings. The editors will assess all papers offered for publication, and will seek the advice of referees where appropriate. Hence contributors to the Seminar are under no obligation to offer their papers for publication in *LICS*, and papers given at the Seminar will not necessarily be accepted for publication in *LICS*.

Because *LICS* is not the proceedings of the Seminar, the editors will be happy to consider for publication papers not given at Seminar meetings.

First, existing thematic clusters are open to additional contributions. We cannot issue an open call for papers or undertake to consider unsolicited manuscripts: because we are operating on an open access basis our editorial resources are limited, and will vary from time to time for particular themes. But if you are interested in contributing a paper on an existing theme, you should feel free to contact the editors to explore the possibility.

Secondly, additional thematic clusters may be added from time to time. Some of these will arise from other activities with which the School of Classics at Leeds is associated (for example, the projected cluster on Marriage arises from the Trans-Pennine Ancient History Seminar).⁵ Others will reflect the research interests of individual members of staff at Leeds (thus, for example, the cluster on Rhetoric). But we would also welcome the opportunity to host clusters edited or co-edited by colleagues from other universities (we aim, in any case, to broaden the editorial team beyond Leeds once we are established). Again, please contact us if you are interested in pursuing this possibility.

Thirdly, because of its low cost and increasing technical flexibility, electronic publication offers an effective way to distribute material that might be difficult to publish in a conventional journal (for example, because of its length, its technical nature, or the complexity of its presentation). The editors of *LICS* would be happy to consider proposals of this nature as well.

⁵ For earlier publications of the Trans-Pennine Ancient History Seminar see R. Brock & S. Hodkinson (ed.) *Alternatives to the Democratic Polis* (Oxford 2000) and G.J. Oliver, R. Brock, T.J. Cornell and S. Hodkinson (edd.) *The Sea in Antiquity* (BAR International Series 899, Oxford 2000).

Web links

L'Année Philologique <http://www.annee-philologique.com/>

Budapest Open Access Initiative <http://www.soros.org/openaccess/>

Create Change <http://www.arl.org/create/home.html>

Histos <http://www.dur.ac.uk/Classics/histos/>

Revue ouverte en ligne <http://agoraclass.fltr.ucl.ac.be/archives/>

Scholarly Publication Forum <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/library/scholpub/>

SPARC <http://www.arl.org/sparc/>

TEMPE Principles <http://www.arl.org/scomm/tempe.html>

TOCSIN <http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/amphoras/tocs.html>