

Editorial: Reflecting on 20 Years of *Prometheus* as a Joint Effort

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This special issue of *Prometheus* commemorates 20 years of publication which was achieved with the December 2002 issue (Vol. 20, No. 4). Twenty years can be seen as a milestone, and certainly an occasion for self-congratulation. However, while there are many people to congratulate and much to be proud of, the impetus behind this special issue has been primarily about reflection and evaluation: what has *Prometheus* achieved over the past 20 years; and how have the contributions published in the journal taken their place in the broader literature dealing with issues in technological change, innovation, information economics, communications and science policy.

For those who know *Prometheus*, its success stands as a testament to its General Editor, Don Lamberton—his scholarship and intellectual enthusiasm influencing all themes covered by the journal. However, *Prometheus* is not a story about one individual, but rather a confirmation of what can be achieved by people working cooperatively and sharing knowledge as part of an ‘invisible college’. As Don Lamberton says himself: ‘*Prometheus* was and still is a joint effort not only of the editors but many others who shared the aims and enthusiastically supported the venture’. Initiated by Don Lamberton, Stuart Macdonald and Ann Moyal, *Prometheus* has benefited from the guidance of a wide range of editorial talent (see box below). Tom Mandeville’s contribution to editorial tasks in the early life of the journal helped to put it onto a strong footing. He now retains a link with the journal as a member of the editorial board. Stuart Macdonald shared editorial roles with Don Lamberton from the very beginning and he has retained that role (albeit in a different capacity) to the present day. His inspiring and tireless academic approach to scholarship, which advances critical and at times, iconoclastic thought, has proven over the years to be a major strength of the journal. Don’s wife, Clare, also deserves special mention as she has provided much support in the way of editorial assistance, especially in the years up to 1997 when the journal was published in Australia. Likewise, the success of *Prometheus* would not have been possible without both individual and institutional support from many sources over the past 20 years.¹

This special issue, like other issues before it, is the product of ‘joint effort’. Following consultation with the Editors and Editorial Board, invited contributions

were sought from leading scholars to three sections: invited commentary; papers; and review articles. Those invited to comment were all long-time associates of *Prometheus* or familiar with it in the course of their professional work. Each of the contributors to this section (Moyal, Jones, Menou, Gassmann, Pipe, Lowe and Cutler) bring different perspectives to the task of reflection. They all point to the fact that *Prometheus* contributes vitally to scholarship and policy discourse by being challenging, critical and willing to make connections across disciplines. This latter task of making connections is an activity that nowadays is persistently under threat, not only in universities, but also in many walks of private and public life.

The second major component of the special issue is 'papers'. In this section, five leading scholars (Curtis, Wigand, Mansell, Gibbons and Kirby) write about themes of their own choice. This snap-shot of contemporary thinking, 20 years on from the first issue of *Prometheus* in 1983, presents readers with themes that have been persistently present in the journal. Curtis' discussion of regulatory regime change in international telecommunications leads naturally into papers by Wigand and Mansell that address the promise, disappointment and unanticipated outcomes arising from electronic commerce. Wigand makes connections between the physical constraints of electricity, the market and regulation to explore the limitations of electronic markets in electricity. Mansell addresses development issues centred around electronic commerce, indeed, a specific manifestation of the more general problem of the connection between knowledge and development. The paper by Gibbons picks up this knowledge theme by reflecting on the changing nature of knowledge production and the challenge this presents for innovation management. Finally, Kirby, a leading proponent of privacy matters in the information age, reflects on privacy law and its current direction as a challenge to what sort of society we want.

The section on 'review articles' provided an opportunity for five experts in their field to evaluate where *Prometheus* has located itself in terms of its major sub-themes. Potts addresses information economics, Goggin reviews communications, Hall assesses innovation and innovation policy, and Cozzens reviews science policy. The book review section of *Prometheus*, a most valuable part of the journal, oft-ignored as an important part of academic work, is analysed by Doessel, himself a former book review editor. His remarks, confirming those of Moyal in the invited commentary, underline the fact that book reviewing is a real art and continues to play a valuable role in knowledge dissemination.

In sum, this special issue remains the product of a joint effort in the *Prometheus* tradition. Specifically, I wish to thank not only the contributors but in particular Don Lamberton, who was always happy to provide valuable advice and guidance throughout the project whenever I needed it. My thanks also to John Nightingale, Associate Editor, who assisted with editing.

Notes and References

1. *Prometheus* acknowledges the support of the following institutions and individuals: Alcoa of Australia Limited; Ampol Petroleum Pty Ltd; Australian Computer Society Incorporated; Australian Patents, Trade Marks and Designs Office; Broken Hill Proprietary Limited; Control Data Australia Pty Limited; Data General Australia Pty Limited; Esso Australia Ltd; IBM Australia Limited; O'Reilly Computer Pty Ltd; Overseas Telecommunications Commission (Australia); Queensland Department of Commercial and Industrial Development; Telecom Australia; Telstra Fund for Social and Policy Research in Telecommunications; University of

Queensland, Department of Economics; Professor Patrick Troy, Urban Research Programme, RSSH, Australian National University, Canberra; and Professor Glenn Withers, Graduate Program in Public Policy, APSEG (formerly RSSH), Australian National University, Canberra.

Members of the *Prometheus* Editorial Team, 1983–2002

While many people have contributed to the success of this journal over the past 20 years, as editorial assistants, editorial board members, book reviewers, the following list of people have had a role as an ‘editor’ during 1983–2002.

Don Lamberton (Editor)—1983 to 1990; (General Editor)—1991 to 2002
Stuart Macdonald (Editor)—1983 to 1986; (European Editor)—1987 to 2002

Ann Moyal (Honorary Editor)—1983 to December 1989

Tom Mandeville (Editor)—1983 to December 1986

Darrel Doessel (Book Review Editor)—December 1987 to December 1989

Richard Joseph (Book Review Editor)—June 1994 to December 1999

H. J. Engelbrecht (New Zealand Editor)—December 1996 to 2002

William Dutton (North American Editor)—August 1997 to 2002

John Nightingale (Associate Editor)—June 2000 to 2002

Tim Ray (Book Review Editor)—June 2000 to 2002