

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the new *Prometheus*. The journal is actually in its 28th year and will be continuing the best traditions of the old *Prometheus*. The journal has long offered an outlet for academic papers looking at information issues. It has always been a liberal, free-thinking sort of journal, accepting the demands of discipline, but aware of its constraints, the sort of academic journal that almost anyone might be caught reading.

All this remains. What Don Lamberton built up over a quarter of a century as general editor is the journal's heritage and is not to be squandered. But the world has changed over this period. Information is no longer neglected in academic study. There are whole journals devoted to specific aspects of information, and many more glad to publish information research. Don Lamberton fought long and hard for recognition of information economics. The battle has been won.

When *Prometheus* was little, hardly anyone studied Management. Halcyon days. Now it seems that almost everyone does. The subject has overrun Technology Policy and Science Policy, from which *Prometheus* drew much of its original strength. It has sucked the vital juices from Sociology and Psychology, and forced Economics into strategic retreat. How to cope with this behemoth? Should *Prometheus* become a Management journal. The prospect chills. Or should *Prometheus* take what it can from Management Studies. We have chosen to focus on innovation, an information activity which has always been of interest to *Prometheus*, and which is often ill-served by Management Studies. There is more to innovation than change management and gung-ho entrepreneurialism.

The world, too, has moved on. In the 1970s, *Prometheus* authors sought to influence government policymakers. Now, innovation is seen as the product of market forces rather than government policy, though this supremacy is threatened by recent events. Innovation is expected from managers, and it is managers, managers in the public as well as the private sector, whom *Prometheus* must seek to influence.

Those familiar with the old *Prometheus* will appreciate the extent of the alterations that have been made. Gone is the editorial board, a radical decision that is no slight to its members, many of whom have had the journal's interests at heart for ten or twenty years. I am grateful for their efforts, and thankful that many have promised to continue supporting *Prometheus*. The journal now has a team of 14 editors, selected for their expertise in specific areas. This means that the assessment and processing of submitted papers can always be overseen by a subject expert. It is not totally irrelevant that the system removes some of the burden from the general editor. Similar strategy has produced a team of four book review editors to do what Tim Ray did all by himself for a decade.

We have also seized the opportunity to make the journal as functional as possible. The old citation system had become clunky and has been replaced by a very simplified Harvard system. No longer do keywords describe an article; search engines have made them redundant. There are many other changes, mostly minor. The new cover is not. Gone are the *Prometheus* stripes. Sanctified by tradition, stripes were originally

chosen only because they were available from an Australian printer's stock patterns. The new cover is significant. This particular depiction of the Prometheus myth is from the Vatican City Library. The gods punish Prometheus the titan for stealing the art of maintaining fire and giving it to mankind. The punishment is cruel and unusual: Prometheus is chained to a rock for all eternity. By day, his liver is to be pecked by a vulture; by night the liver is renewed, ready for fresh pecking on the morrow. At one level, the allusion is to innovation: at a deeper level, it is to the lot of the modern academic writing about innovation.

In large part, the worth of the modern academic is judged in terms of publication in top journals, these being defined as those with the highest impact factor. This is a ratio of the journal's papers to the number of citations to these papers. Editors welcome papers that will raise their impact factors; especially if they cite lots of papers already published in their own journals. Authors comply with papers that are endlessly citable, which means papers that generalise, papers that agree with almost everything. Papers that disagree, and research papers of any sort are scarcely publishable. *Prometheus* welcomes these papers. *Prometheus* looks to publish the very best of research on innovation, the more radical the better. *Prometheus* papers will be cited not because they are crafted to be citable, but because they are good.

The journal now has a debate section, introduced as an experiment, and already surprisingly popular. A proposition is made on a topical issue, which attracts responses from those knowledgeable in the area. These are invited papers and not refereed. Academics rarely have the opportunity to debate contemporary issues in academic journals; *Prometheus* will provide an academic forum where accepted wisdom can be challenged – and defended. The vigour of this debate may even infect the research papers *Prometheus* publishes, and discourage the formulaic writing that cripples so much academic publication. Research papers will be refereed in the normal way. *Prometheus* has long been proud of its refereeing system: we scour the world for the very best of appropriate referees and do not rely on internal panels. Referees' reports are primarily for the benefit of the author, not the journal. A single-blind system is used on the assumption that a real expert is likely to know who is writing in the area, and it is silly to pretend otherwise. We will not resort to electronic submission systems; it is vital that authors (and referees, actually) are treated courteously and personally throughout.

And that's about it – except for our publishers. As will be apparent from our first debate section, academic publishers are not always popular with academics. But Taylor & Francis is very much in favour, at the moment. Taylor & Francis has supported and facilitated all the changes made to *Prometheus*. At no small bother and expense, everything needed has been arranged and provided, with no compromise to editorial independence. *Prometheus* headquarters has moved from Australia to the UK, which makes meetings easier, but has no editorial implications. David Green, publishing director of Taylor & Francis, maintains the personal interest he has taken in the journal for many years, and I am grateful to him. Katie Chandler manages the team that now supervises *Prometheus* with an efficiency that is daunting, yet curiously friendly.

Which brings us to this particular issue. The debate is on academic publishing, which seems appropriate. John Houghton and Charles Oppenheim base their proposal on a report they and others submitted in 2009 to the Joint Information Systems Committee in the UK. They propose alternatives to the way in which academics publish and publishers are rewarded. They suggest that forms of open access would

be preferable to the prevailing system. Not surprisingly, publishers have their reservations, as is evident from Stephen Hall's response. The other respondents are of the opinion that academics generally support open access, but perhaps more in principal than in practice. Publishers conventionally give structure to academic publishing. Self publishing or institutional publishing on the internet are possible, but might lack the same structure. But if there are to be commercial publishers, they must be paid. It seems logical that they be paid direct rather than through the current tortuous system, but there is no rush to write cheques. And is the argument for open access weakened when academics are often more concerned about where they publish than what, when papers are written to be counted and cited rather than read?

There are three research papers in this issue. Enos and Etheridge devise a new model of technological change, one dependent on events rather than time. Two Saxtons, Steen and Verreynne investigate failure, a topic much less popular among academics than success. Their context is new ventures, where failure is much more common than success. And last, Tomes and Armstrong look at innovation in design. Their context is historical, their message that 'good design' is a product of compromise. For that very reason, good design is never good enough. The same will no doubt be said about *Prometheus*, but not because it sought compromise.

I hope you will enjoy the new *Prometheus*. Suggestions about further change will always be gratefully received.

Stuart Macdonald
General Editor