



association for literary
& linguistic computing

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Association for Literary and Linguistic Computing

LLC Editor's Report

Marilyn Deegan, 9 December 2003

1. General issues

The Journal is running reasonably well at the moment. Submissions are good, and we are almost on schedule! I continue to be very happy with the two reviews editors. I had mentioned problems with editorial changes at OUP in the past, but all seems well now with our new editor, Maxine Smith. We are trying to do much more electronically—I take submissions as attachments more and more, and all proofs are sent out as PDFs. OUP are working towards more online management of journals and are offering editors the chance to use online editing tools, but a decision to move towards this should not be taken until we have discussed in full the future of the journal.

2. Publication of the journal

At the December 2002 committee meeting, we agreed to pursue the approach by Philip Joseph of Blackwells, our former managing editor at OUP, which suggesting that Blackwells might be able to offer us a better publication service. At that time we decided that the suggestion that the Journal go out to tender should be put to the membership at the AGM in June, which was duly done and there were no dissenting voices. Harold has written to the membership since then and again has had no dissent.

Harold and I have had a further meeting with Philip Joseph and also two meetings with Clare Morton (our managing editor) and others at OUP. The upshot of the OUP meetings is that OUP accept that we may wish to go out to tender, and they are very keen not to lose us. They will certainly want to bid to keep the Journal with OUP, and they have a number of new developments, especially in the area of serving up online content, that I think would be advantageous for the Journal should we stay with OUP.

I would now like to propose formally to the Committee that the publication of the Journal be put out to tender, and that OUP be notified of this decision by 31 December, as required by our contract with them. OUP and Blackwells should be invited to tender, and we should write an Invitation to Tender that invites their response to certain key requirements. There are a number of documents you have seen that are pertinent to this: they include the proposal written last year by Philip Joseph plus a list of questions that Harold sent to him, with his replies. He has also given us two tender documents that were submitted to Blackwells by professional associations for us to use as a possible model for the tendering process. The tender documents have been anonymized; other documents are

confidential to the Committee only.

I am in favour of exploring other possibilities because Blackwells can offer a range of membership services such as we have envisaged but never managed to achieve with OUP, and a great deal of the burden of serving members would be taken from us by them. Also, Blackwells on-line publishing facilities are second-to-none. Their merger with Blackwells Scientific has meant that their humanities journals can now be exposed to some of the innovative publishing technologies developed for the sciences. See also pp. 6-7 of the Philip Joseph proposal for some initiatives they are taking in providing subject-specific portals for Associations, which I think would be very exciting for ALLC and also perhaps for ACH to join in with.

We are assured by Blackwells that, should we decide to make the transition, they will do everything in their power to ensure that there is as little disruption for members as possible. The design will remain the same, all that will change will be the publisher's name and some addresses. The other thing that will not change, except possibly for the better, will be the revenue stream. We are assured of at least as good a deal as with OUP, but with better marketing, so that at worst revenue would stay the same, but we would hope for an increase.

Of particular interest to me as editor are the portals described above and the Electronic Editorial Office service that they offer (see p. 11), which would allow me to set up a full submission and reviewing process on line.

We have explored very carefully the implications of going to tender in this way, in particular with reference to our current arrangement with OUP. So whatever we ultimately decide, my view is that we will end up with a better service for members: this has already acted as a wake-up call for OUP. There will be a considerable amount of work involved in affecting the change, much of which will be done by the editorial team and the Officers. I am very excited at the possibility of making some changes, and am prepared to do whatever it takes to make the journal a better resource for our members.

Marilyn
Editor,
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