

An Editorial Update for *Island Studies Journal* (ISJ)

With the publication of this issue, *Island Studies Journal* completes its second volume. Thus, this is a good excuse to take stock of both accomplishments and future challenges.

ISJ has set out to offer quality scholarship in island studies. Its flexible, electronic status means that there is no compulsion to publish a fixed number of articles per issue, nor must all articles conform to strict format guidelines. Since it is available for free download anywhere in the world where an internet connection is available, the journal's contents are widely accessible, and this is especially appreciated in developing countries. Thus, we are very much aware, for example, that Indonesia and the Philippines (along with Japan and the United Kingdom) are the world's most heavily populated island states. We take heart from messages such as the following, received after the first issue of *ISJ* was published:

“In recent years, while the price of everything spirals upwards, the availability of a peer-reviewed, electronic, open access, freely downloaded journal will undoubtedly be a great gift to everyone, especially those from developing countries. It will also be a great place to publish articles related to island themes, for I read that free access journals tend to be more often cited than those that are procured at a cost: often at a very high cost that scientists from developing countries are unable to afford. I browsed through the titles of the first volume of this journal very quickly and found many articles that interest me greatly” *Dr Choo Poh Sze, WorldFish Centre, Malaysia.*

ISJ plans to continue publishing two issues per year: at the end of May and at the end of November. Special issues will be entertained if warranted, preferably as identifiable sub-sections within scheduled issues.

ISJ has been endorsed from its inception by the *Global Islands Network* (GIN) and by the *International Small Islands Studies Association* (ISISA). A direct link to the *ISJ* home-page is provided from the home-pages of these organizations' respective web-sites.

I am also pleased to report that the newly set up *Islands Commission* of the *International Geographical Union* (IGU) has also endorsed *ISJ*. A well-attended inaugural conference for this Commission has just been held in Taipei, Taiwan, and *ISJ* looks forward to receiving manuscripts based on papers presented at this conference, and future ones. While endorsed as the official journal of this Commission, *ISJ* will continue to enjoy its current academic independence and breadth of scope which permits it to tackle and publish quality material in island studies, and not necessarily just 'geography'.

ISJ receives manuscripts for articles and/or review essays, as well as book reviews. The journal has so far formally received 48 manuscript submissions, of which 27 have now been published (17 scholarly articles, 10 review essays). Of the rest, 19 have been rejected, and two are under review. No less than 39 book reviews have appeared in print. Of course, all this is only possible thanks to the hard work of an impressive number of scholars: not just those who craft papers and book reviews, but also those who volunteer to review and

judge the merit of submissions. I also acknowledge the support of those publishers who offer complimentary copies of their books for critical review in the pages of *ISJ*.

As Executive Editor, I regularly suggest to my various contacts that they think about submitting manuscripts to be considered for publication in *ISJ*. From experience, however, I must add that various scholars from developing countries, as well as graduate students generally, may need some extra nudging to get over a hesitation to submit. The *ISJ* International Editorial Board is also exhorted to keep a watchful eye out for submissions of suitable material from their own various contacts; or to recommend new books for review.

Island Studies Journal is nested in a wider research and information resource: the www.islandstudies.ca web-site, set up using both *Social Science & Humanities Research Council of Canada* (SSHRC) & *Canada Fund for Innovation* (CFI) funds. The site is a research depository, on subjects ranging from tourism and immigration to jurisdiction and Canadian geography. The overall site attracted over 568,000 hits from January to November 2006, with a mean of 63 unique visitors making 193 visits *daily*. Countries responsible for the 'top 10' hits during November 2006 include Canada and USA, but also Japan, Australia and Fiji. Five out of the 6 'top hits' on this site relate to *ISJ*.

Various individuals have taken the initiative to request and obtain admission to the *ISJ* electronic list service, which provides news alerts. There are currently 132 persons on this list, hailing from all over the world. Of these, 22 are *ISJ* International Editorial Board members; most of the rest are island aficionados, academics or graduate students.

ISJ can become a platform for advancing and engaging in cutting-edge scholarly debate. Thus, *ISJ* 2(1) included a provocative paper that critiques the notion of an 'island archaeology', generating a multi-author response in *ISJ* 2(2). An essay critiquing a controversial 2006 article on the impact of colonialism on islander health and income is published in *ISJ* 2(2), along with a rejoinder by the authors of the original article.

As *ISJ* becomes more established, we will also need to consider impact factors. Scholars in various countries – including the United Kingdom and Australia – are under considerable pressure to publish only in top-rated (5*) scholarly journals. A new and multi-disciplinary journal like *ISJ* is doubly disadvantaged in this exercise. While a world-class, global and pluri-disciplinary international editorial board is one guarantor of commitment to quality, we need to facilitate some 'benchmarking' of the quality of published scholarship in *ISJ*. *Suggestions as to how best to go about this task are very welcome from readers.*

With low production and maintenance costs, plus free access and download functions, one augurs that *ISJ* will expand in scope, interest and policy relevance, connecting with a broader and more representative cadre of contributors engaging in still more topics and issues pertinent to island studies.

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