

EDITORIAL

With this issue, I stand down as Editor of *ARD* after two spells, which have involved issues 39 (1985) to 49 (1989) and issues 63 (1993) to the present issue 95 (2004): a total of 46 issues altogether. I am delighted to pass on editorial duties to the safe hands of Terry Barringer, who has already been associated with the journal as Book Reviews Editor since 1994 and to the new Deputy Editor, Ian Cooke.

In *ARD* 88, 2002, in my article "SCOLMA: a chronology of forty years, 1962 to 2002", I included a brief bibliographical history of SCOLMA's journal over the years as well as a list of the officers associated with its production, while in the editorial accompanying issue 90, 2003, I marked what was the 60th issue of *ARD* as the sole responsibility of SCOLMA with some musings on the role of the journal. I saw it as "modest but persistent: not a newsletter (although it contains news items), not a scholarly refereed journal (although distinguished academics as well as information professionals are happy to contribute)". *ARD*'s strength has always seemed to me to be its very flexibility: it can accept articles of almost any length, of short term news or of long term reference interest. Its roster of contributors from around the world reflects the fact that there are few if any other journals with the same remit. *Africana journal* (particularly in its earlier days as *Africana library journal*) had something of the same approach, but ceased publication in 1998. The earlier *African studies bulletin* produced by the African Studies Association in the U.S.A. was again performing a similar role to *ARD* until it metamorphosed many years ago into the very different *African studies review*. The *Africana libraries newsletter* produced by our counterpart in the U.S., the ALC, is a very useful source but no more than what its title suggests.

Over the years SCOLMA has recognised the value of its journal and it puts a significant proportion of its finances into supporting it: subscription charges do not by any means cover costs of production and circulation. Given the fact that there is less scope these days for the other publications which SCOLMA used to produce, *ARD* is very much the public face of SCOLMA especially for those who are based outside the U.K. and cannot easily attend its seminars and conferences. It is gratifying to note its public recognition: for example being the only journal other than *Choice* whose reviews of reference works Hans Zell has chosen to cite in the new edition of his *African studies companion* (2003). I know the new editors will continue to enhance the value and standing of the title.

I should like to place on record my gratitude for all the help over the last 12 years that I have received from first Diana Guthrie and then Mandy Banton as Editorial Assistant and Terry Barringer as Book Review Editor, all of them contributing much more than their formal titles might suggest in finding

contributions and writing articles themselves as well as collaborating in putting each issue together. I shall also of course be standing down from the Committee of SCOLMA after what I have discovered is almost continuous membership since 1974 (one year off in the late 70s!) and service as an officer since 1980, so it is appropriate for me to thank all my colleagues on the Committee during those years for their cheerful support and above all for sharing their enthusiasm in supporting and promoting the cause of African studies and its resources.

John McIlwaine