

## Editorial

Two years into an Editorship is a good time to take stock. In the essentials, *Ageing & Society* is doing well. There is a healthy flow of quality submissions, and the ‘bank’ of accepted papers has built up to fill two issues ahead. In other words, the time between a paper’s acceptance for publication and its appearance has extended to around 6–8 months. The interval will be held at this level. Recognising the increased number of papers that merit publication, Cambridge University Press has agreed to an expansion of a volume’s pages by 12 per cent. They were happy to allow more, but we’ll proceed step-by-step for, as it is, Jean Wilkinson works flat out.

My own view is that the published papers are full of interest and that many are original and important contributions. Their topics cover diverse individual experiences, social changes, and policy and practice issues associated with contemporary ageing and old age. Among the most welcome contributions published during 2003 (or in train) have been papers on out-of-the-mainstream topics, such as the injuries sustained by older car drivers and another on befriending schemes. Several papers have been from beyond the journal’s habitual sources in the English-speaking and western European countries, and there are examples from ergonomics, clinical psychology, information science and economics. Few from the humanities or from clinicians have recently been published, but the in-tray has promising submissions. Two resourceful review articles on gerontological research and publications in Germany and France also appeared. The second was commissioned by Joanna Bornat and Julia Johnson, the new Review Editors, whom I thank warmly for quickly re-establishing the review section of the journal.

Much more can of course be done. The conditions of old age and the resources, aspirations and activities of older people in both affluent and low-income countries are changing rapidly. Despite the considerable expansion of gerontological inquiry, only a small fraction of the changes are being described, explained and theorised. While novelty does not guarantee that a submission will be favourably received, it is an asset, so well fashioned reports of sound research on neglected topics and populations are strongly encouraged. More generally, how can prospective authors both raise the odds of a paper being accepted and help the editorial team? Several unremarkable things should be done. They are standard recommendations and well known by experienced authors: the

trouble is that, given the haste and pressures of our daily lives, they are commonly not done. The first is to write for a multi-disciplinary and multi-national readership, and to draw out the relevance and lessons for other countries, not just your own. An early statement of the objectives, structure and strategy of the paper is a very good idea. Also make sure that if tables and figures are presented, they serve a purpose and are comprehensible. To many authors that means being more selective and making sure that the titles, labels, annotations and notes communicate well (many I see may prompt understanding for the author but are impenetrable to others). Whenever possible ask a colleague or friend if they can 'read' the illustrations.

In 2005, *Ageing & Society* will reach volume 25. A silver anniversary is another good time to take stock, to reflect upon and refresh priorities and directions. Several ways of marking the anniversary have been discussed with the Editorial Board, and some authors have been invited to prepare papers that articulate a long-term critical view of social gerontological effort and achievement. I would be delighted to receive additional suggestions and to react to proposals. A celebratory special issue is not proposed, but rather that several reflective and forward-looking contributions are published throughout the year.

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