

EDITORIAL

SCOLMA is pleased to present here the texts of eight of the papers which were delivered at its 40th anniversary conference held at the Rothermere American Institute Oxford on 25th and 26th June 2002 entitled "African research and documentation in the new Millennium". We are grateful to all the authors for so readily agreeing to let us publish what we hope will be a valuable collection of reflections on African studies and Africana documentation in Africa itself, in the U.S. and in Europe.

It was no accident that the title of the conference echoed that of SCOLMA's journal. This is the 90th issue of the journal under its present title, since it began in 1973, and the 60th issue (a diamond jubilee no less) since SCOLMA took over sole responsibility for its production and publication in 1983, tasks that had been shared with the African Studies Association of the U.K. for the decade from 1973 to 1982. And of course *ARD* itself is the successor to *Library materials on Africa: newsletter of SCOLMA* which commenced in 1962, the year of SCOLMA's foundation. At the Oxford conference, where Pat Larby and I provided a brief introduction on the history of SCOLMA (more details are available in "SCOLMA: a chronology of forty years, 1962-2002", *ARD*, 88, 2002, 3-17) I described *ARD* as being "modest but persistent". There have often been delays in production, and our printers have long ago given up the hope of getting copy on roughly the same day every year, but we have managed to sustain 121 consecutive issues over forty years under our two titles, which says something for both the support of the Africanist readership and the efforts of the members of the various editorial teams.

ARD is not a newsletter (although it contains news items). It is not a scholarly refereed journal (although distinguished academics as well as information professionals have been happy to contribute: see the present issue for example). It has the flexibility to take items of almost any length and to interest itself in almost any area of African studies. It publishes contributions both of immediate "newsy" interest and of long-term reference value. It has contributors from around the world (and that includes from countries such as Australia, Barbados, Japan and Trinidad as well as from nearly half the countries on the African continent, from the USA and Canada and from some dozen European countries). Our bibliographical content includes both one-off articles with coverage of specific topics and continuing up-dates, such as Musiker's series on "Bibliographical activities in Southern Africa" and the supplements to SCOLMA's *Writings on African archives*. Our book reviews have a reputation for "telling it like it is". We have long made a special feature of reviewing reference works, which often get short shrift in the reviewing sections of Africanist journals, and our reviews of this category are widely quoted.

SCOLMA sees its journal as an essential component in its contribution to African research and documentation. This is the opportunity for the current editor to thank all those Committee members who have worked with *ARD* (the article referred to above records their names) and all those who have contributed articles, news items and other information to the journal over the years. We look forward to the contributors of the future.