

Editorial

It's the best seat in the house. For a view of area studies at the crucial point that results take their most professional form in finished studies, a journal of review has no equal. Most of us teach the results of past research and do research that produces new knowledge; many serve on boards that weigh research proposals or do program reviews, or for publishers and at other points along the process of conceiving, conducting, evaluating and disseminating scholarship. But it is the outcome of all this activity that an interdisciplinary area studies journal of review brings especially into view.

Between 300 and 400 books in all fields and at all levels of Middle East studies come to the *Bulletin* each year. Over 200 eventually—one hopes expeditiously—get reviewed or noted each year. Some notable ones escape. But the sample is a picture of professional production, and securing it is testimony to area studies as communication across disciplinary boundaries.

Falling between *Choice*, on the one hand, and *IJMES* or other journals for original research, on the other hand, the *Bulletin's* distinctive charter is to provide terse, timely, expert assessment for colleagues working on the region in other disciplines. This uniquely inter-professional communication is one of the realities of regional studies. For the willingness and ability of colleagues to provide this service, special thanks goes to members who accept this task that helps make interdisciplinary area studies in practice both possible and fecund.

This stream of books and reviews also affords a view on the changing emphases and contours of area studies both in new publication and in reviews of it. The de-orientalization of our field has become manifest in myriad ways, but two stand out recently. One is the multiplication of perspectives not just about the region but from it that give diversity and add nuance to scholarly representation of it. The other is pressure to deparochialize area studies—institutional, financial and policy pressure that would, as MESA President Leila Fawaz has noted, give priority to problems defined in terms and interests such as “globalization.” At a minimum, this sets a new context for area studies, for their justification, rationalization and actual conduct.

My regret as editor is how little of work from within the region the *Bulletin* has received and been able to review. Part of the problem is practical; but the *Bulletin* could be, and should be, substantially more international in its sample. We have colleagues in Middle Eastern countries and elsewhere whose work should be part of the corpus that we make available to each other in this way, too. As a journal of review by professionals for other professionals, the *Bulletin* can stand as well for the internationalism of scholarship as for its multidisciplinary character.

Expanding the reach also means renewed attention to surrounding areas that have come back into play in the altering, post-imperial world political economy. We have been fortunate to follow some publications on Central Asia and the Indian Ocean that, at one time and now again, are part of the Middle Eastern world and not just its peripheries. For this, and for pushing the envelope in other ways, the Associate Editors deserve the gratitude of all: since 1992, they have

included Ragui Assad, Michael Beard, William O. Beeman, Sohrab Behdad, Irene Bierman, Taffy Bodman, Michael Bonine, Miriam Cooke, Virginia Danielson, Linda Darling, John Entelis, Jerrold Green, Fred Lawson, Serif Mardin, William Ochsenwald, Kevin Reinhart, Shreve Simpson, Susan Slyomovics, Tamara Sonn and Mary Wilson. Several of them published books of their own during this time in addition to performing yeoman service for this journal. Several orchestrated reviews in their topics or subareas into veritable mini-seminars, and Virginia Danielson developed a topical form for reviewing recordings by genre.

The last five years have coincided with expansion also of the Middle East and of Middle East studies on-line. The Internet has spread throughout academe to the public and from the Middle East's diaspora to the Middle East and to Middle East studies. Every center for Middle East studies is now on-line, and one, MENIC at the University of Texas at Austin, is part of a Virtual Library system that is a new tool for scholarship and outreach. In the Middle East, likewise, the tools of the Internet both connect and make public what previously was far less so in a world that is increasingly far more so. The *Bulletin* began tracking the Internet as a new medium of publication and has now joined it in order, I hope, to make some of the results of our craft more widely available in the changing world that the Middle East and Middle East studies now inhabit.

Now, the *Bulletin* passes to the care of Ann Lesch (Politics Department, Villanova University, Villanova, PA 19085; Fax: 610-519-7249, E-mail: MESABUL@UCIS.VILL.EDU). I hope all members will continue to extend to her the same support you have graciously given to me and to this journal.

