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New directions

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Editorial New directions

Keyan G. Tomaselli

Starting with this number, we will be including an editorial statement in every issue. This is occasioned by audit creep and the need for editorial behind-the-scenes work to be recognised by the South African state's research incentive funding mechanism. As we all know, everywhere, it is journals like this one that provide the platforms for authors to get published – often at our own expense – while the journals' production teams and editors are barely recognised by performance management indices or sometimes even by our authors, a few of whom who see us as irritating gatekeepers or obstructions to the easy and immediate publication of their articles.

But without us editors, most of whom in the Humanities and Social Sciences are unpaid volunteers, little would get published. Behind the scenes are phalanxes of voluntary reviewers and other personnel whose time, intellectual contributions and efforts remain unquantified, unpaid and under-appreciated in a neoliberal instrumentalist world where everything is measured by bureaucrats who themselves may never have been academics, authors or editors. The best we can do is to list these reviewers annually in recognition of their services, and hope that this recognition will mean something on their CVs when they apply for tenure, promotion or salary increases.

Neoliberalism means 'user pays'. But in academic publishing, this principle is not so easily applied. Licence agreements are complex and often opaque, many authors expect journals to publish *pro bono*; lecturers who should know better and who fail to apply for permissions prior to mass replicating articles for classes, impede sustainable publishing. At the end of the day, it is the journal that often subsidises its authors and readers. Of course, some highly read authors subsidise the journal and



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thereby also subsidise authors whose articles do not get read, downloaded or used in classes.

The *Critical Arts* business model

Critical Arts is a registered non-profit organisation owned by the editorial collective of *Critical Arts*. The journal *Critical Arts* has been licensed to Taylor & Francis (T&F) since 2005 for the international edition via the University of South Africa (Unisa) Press, which has the Africa and print licence, and produces the journal. This very effective partnership was facilitated in the late-1990s with T&F by South Africa's National Research Foundation through Unisa Press in terms of national development policy. In South Africa, most locally produced journals levy page fees to contribute towards the running of the journals, usually recovered from authors' research grants or their universities. However, publication in *Critical Arts* of accepted papers does not hinge on this payment, if authors are unable to raise this small amount via their own universities or research accounts.

Page fees, which characterise the South African academic journal business model, are erratic, nominal and in no way meet the actual production cost of an article published. This means that significant further subsidisation of South African authors, from the likes of organisations such as Critical Arts Projects, is required to enable publication.

Critical Arts' partnership with Unisa Press and T&F has enabled the journal to position itself in terms of impact factors within the ambit of global flagship titles in a very short period of time. This repositioning could not have occurred otherwise, and authors benefit directly from the services contracted by *Critical Arts* from T&F.

Other journals are published under a variety of models, including: 1) insisting that authors are paid-up members of the disciplinary associations that produce them; 2) requiring authors to buy a subscription prior to publication; 3) levying submission processing fees, anything from US\$10 to US\$ 3000 (often in the case of open access routes to publication); 4) operating under full institutional support; indeed some fail because they have no long-term sustainability model. None of these apply to *Critical Arts*.

Most crucially, *Critical Arts* does not require that authors sign away their copyright to T&F in perpetuity, via any existing and still-to-be invented formats. The copyright is held by Critical Arts Projects in association with its authors.

Future special issues

We are now developing a franchise-like model around special theme issues guest edited by a whole new cohort of key academics from across the world. This not only spreads the workload, but opens up new opportunities and thematic avenues, and

identifies new, more wide-spread resources, in addition to diversifying our author and reader base. This model has emerged from an increasing number of approaches for us to consider guest edited thematic issues, often from academics who are not members of our editorial board. These special issues are sometimes bounded by one or two numbers, but we are now considering a more permanent, regularised outsourcing arrangement. Amongst these are:

- *Visual culture*, an annual number to be edited from Visual Identities in Art and Design, University of Johannesburg, by Leora Farber and Tracy Murinik. They will edit a whole number from 2015;
- *Southern screens: cinema at the end of the world – transnational zones and transcultural histories on the screens of the South*, edited by Antonio Traverso, Curtin University, and Deane Williams, Monash University, Australia, to be published once every two years;
- *Researching the San/Aboriginality*, to be edited by Michael Wessels, Literature Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, once every two years.

Critical Arts invites proposals for similar arrangements from its readers and editorial board. Of the six issues published annually, we want to reserve at least two or three for general issues, with the remaining three allocated to special issues. Apart from the above three series, the once-off special issues currently being planned, include:

- *History and the media*, volumes I and II, edited by Ruth Teer-Tomaselli and Donal McCracken;
- *Consumption, media and culture in South Africa*, edited by Mehita Iqani and Bridget Kenny, Witwatersrand University;
- *Discrimination in publishing*, edited by Keyan Tomaselli and Beth le Roux;
- *The political economy of contemporary cultural production: a focus on the breach between text and context*, edited by Irina Turner and Rémi Tchokothe, Bayreuth University, Germany.

Some of these themes have arisen specifically out of small research seminars, writing workshops and other kinds of close interactions where groups of potential authors have coalesced around work being led by guest editors. I have been very fortunate in being invited to act as a resource person at these events. They not only offer training to emergent scholars on how to write for academic publication, but bring to bear a priceless diversity of theoretical, methodological and content experience from a variety of reference people.

The journal is able by means of these networks to revitalise its original interventionist mandate that seeks to actively shape the field and sectors within it. We do not see ourselves merely as a neutral vehicle which, like a postmaster, shuffles

incoming articles between consumers and shelves, as one might in an academic supermarket. From its anti-apartheid inception, *Critical Arts* has attempted to enable a paradigm shift and to challenge received regimes of signification, theoretical hegemonies and neoliberal instrumentalism.

We believe that this new model will assist us to stay fresh, global and relevant.