

The way forward in the era of open access publishing

As we enter our eighth year of publication *Td The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa* clearly is on track to become a well-established journal, not only on the sub-continent, but also in other parts of the world. Our journal has many friends who firmly support all initiatives aimed at promoting multi- inter- and transdisciplinary research in all parts of the world.

One of the notable features of the current edition is that we received almost 50 articles from authors. This is indeed an accomplishment and the editorial board can justifiably be satisfied with the fact that academic authors are increasingly taking note of our journal as a platform for publishing relevant research. We thank all the authors who submitted manuscripts and trust that we can build on relationship that are constructive and promote high standards of academic publishing.

Almost half of the articles received were not approved for publication in *Td*. It is clear that especially our reviewers are discerning and aware of the fact that the journal needs to focus on attracting material that tends to be multi-, inter- or transdisciplinary in nature. Therefore authors aspiring to publish in *Td* should take note of the growing sense of commitment of reviewers for material that transcends conventional disciplinary boundaries. The editorial board underwrites the approach of taking note of how and why authors choose to use multiple disciplines in their research and writing.

There is also, it appears, growing pressure on academics to publish more. Often it happens that the material received is not of a good quality. Peer reviewers take note and tend to respond accordingly. We try to facilitate the process in favour of our authors. Where an article has good content and is clearly of significant importance for research academics, we walk the proverbial extra mile with authors to help them in the long process to publish their articles. Especially where young academics are making their first contributions we are prepared to help all the way. The only requirement is that the manuscripts we receive are of a good quality.

Peer reviewing remains a difficult process. Academics lead busy lives. To peer review an article for a journal is a valuable service rendered. There is no financial gain for the hard work of an academic, sometimes spending longer than a day, to properly work through a manuscript. Essentially, the academic performs a service of love to his or her academic field of investigation. Therefore we are deeply appreciative of our peer reviewers. We thank them for their unstinting support and assistance.

Currently there is a strong international move in favour of open access academic periodical publications. In the United States of American and in the United Kingdom there have been public voices going up against the high cost of civil society has to pay for academic work at universities and research institutions, which they in actual fact fund with the taxes the man on the street pays to the state. The argument is interesting. There seems to be an under current that suggests academic publishing houses are the culprits. They charge high

subscription rates and copies of single articles are even more expensive. This is particularly the case with electronic periodicals.

It seems as if in the knowledge commons the call is now for free access to academic journals.

When universities, such as Harvard and Stanford in the USA, give notice that they are no longer prepared to annually pay millions of dollars annually in subscriptions for some periodical publications, one needs to take note.

Moreover, at many Ivy League universities in the USA there are now even moves now to open learning materials electronically for interested individuals all over the world. Eventually, it seems, it will only be required of the prospective student in any part of the world, to pay the registration and class fees to study and be evaluated at the end of any of thousands of open access courses. In the southern climes of Africa there are many academics supporting the initiative of open access – especially people who are interested in studying further at institutions of higher learning.

Td has been fairly open and freely available since its establishment in 2005. However, it is only in the past two years that the (complete) journal has been available on the open access Boloka website of North-West University. Since its inception *Td* has been available electronically via Sabinet. We have thus reached the relevant academic quarters. We also are aware of the need to further open the journal. However, there needs to be sufficient contemplation and constructive debates amongst academics, managers, publishing companies and society at large. We need to contemplate the manner in which payments are made. We also cannot afford deteriorating standards of publication.

In principle *Td* supports all initiatives aimed at opening up knowledge in the interest of science and society in an equitable and constructive manner.