

Epilogue

Ambitious was the project which our predecessors had envisaged: to publish a bilingual medium of academic discussion in the field of Australian Studies. The journal's history started in 1986 in the form of a rather informal newsletter tailored at readers generally interested in Australia. One of the central aims of the 'Newsletter' was to present information about conferences as well as general publications about Australia, hence to foster Australian Studies in the German-speaking countries. Gerhard Leitner and Adi Wimmer succeeded in overcoming the difficulties of the first years: the newsletters became more academic and started to include fully peer-reviewed articles in both German and English language. To better reflect these changes in scope and target, the 'Newsletter' was eventually renamed as 'Zeitschrift für Australienstudien' in 2006. A new layout and the entry into the MLA International Bibliography as well as AustLit were important steps on this way to professionalism. Diverse and complex as Australian Studies was the variety of topics covered by the articles in the new journal.

We inherited the editorship of the 'Zeitschrift für Australienstudien' in 2012 and continued the initial ambitions of creating a bilingual medium, while also reaching out – more offensively – to our international readers. Inviting more Australian academics – both Indigenous and non-Indigenous – to the editorial board as well as actively promoting the submission from Australia were one of our major concerns to further establish the journal in the international academic community. In 2014, as a logical consequence, we pushed forward the idea of renaming the journal as 'Australian Studies Journal – Zeitschrift für Australienstudien'.

Together the team of the 'Australian Studies Journal' built a cultural bridge between Europe and Australia – not without using research and teaching as keystones of constructing a vivid discourse across disciplinary borders. Sometimes it helped to break ideological confinements and to ease structural guidelines. The result which we see is remarkable: An innovative and open-minded platform of intellectual exchange has been created across disciplines and different academic cultures.

After nearly ten years of editorial work it is now time to say good bye. We have encountered hundreds of texts, re-read them, commented on them, sent them to referees and back to authors, edited them, all of which left us with a bulk of correspondence. Between 2012 and 2021, we sent 2,559 internal emails to each other. Most were 'official', clarifying, dissenting, approving, always carried by enthusiasm, joy, respect and human warmth. Some were 'private' – from mere Christmas wishes to outright emotional support. They reflect the strong bond that has evolved and blossomed through all the years of mutual work.

For all the positive aspects, we must acknowledge that – although we started with enthusiasm – it needs more than a handful of good ideas to keep alive an academic journal. It requires a lot of staying power and permanent support

from others in order to establish a network of creative and literate writers who are willing to contribute their share of help, to bring forward fresh ideas and to launch scholarly discussions. Thanks for all constructive help. Editors need this spark of inspiration; brainstorming is the source of intellectual exchange and no editor can publish without a push from outside. Our pandemic era may show that social isolation will never be a splendid one. This perception is necessary to extend our intellectual horizon. It may trigger other forms of editorial work, while the retiring team looks back on a very successful period of close cooperation. In retrospect, the outgoing editorial staff is very lucky to note that we have worked perfectly together over the years. Although we faced funding as the main organisational problem, the completion of an intelligent and ingenious new issue every year became the key issue of our efforts. And we never lost hope. It was a real pleasure to be part of this joint venture which brought together colleagues and will leave behind an enduring friendship between the two of us.

What else can we learn? Trust in the future and its challenges!

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