

*e-Postcard 11*

## The Dean is Determined to Launch an e-Journal from U of N

*Fredrick.* The Dean here at U of N has decided she wants to launch a new Graduate School Proceedings/Journal on the Internet. She sees it partly as PR for IMC but also to ensure they capture a lot of good 'gray' literature, good discourse in various workshops, seminars and colloquia.

As my swan song here as Visiting Norbert Weiner Professor of Marketing she asked me to do some thinking and lead a taskforce to get it started. She is convinced the technology is not the issue. Easy, she says, once you have the hang of it. She wants me to start with a review of the existing Design and Process Monograph Series IMC has produced for a decade (many of which have just appeared in print edited by Alan Mumford from Gower Press, 1997) and build from there.

The challenges have emerged thus far as follows:

- i. giving some coherence to the disparate themes that have emerged. To impose a theme would surely miss the point.
- ii. ensuring something like a smooth/ regular flow of material. This has not been so in the past.
- iii. convincing Faculty that the new medium is a worthy/ creditable vehicle for publication. The Dean is, I think, rightly convinced that unless this is achieved the idea will be still born or a waste of time.

So, the myth of scholarly skywriting as the new future is once again not supported (Kling,1995; Hitcock,1996). Rather, we are exploring how we can make sure it is included in the ANBAR Electronic Intelligence service. Our thinking is that if we can ensure the



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contributions are there and rated well, then the Proceedings will be a more than satisfactory primary medium for publication. Fortunately conversations with ANBAR's Editorial Selection panel show they are eclectic in their coverage, deliberately including articles of greater benefit to consultants than to academics and vice versa.

They have however also given us an unexpected piece of good advice. Margaret's publisher where she is consulting has for two years now hosted an Internet Free Press (ifp) as a co-operative of people/institutions like U of N seeking to launch e-journals. For a small annual subscription ifp offers advice and fellowship on how to get the e-journal up and running, access to a subscription service if required, enduring server space/ archive for every article published, abstracting into the ANBAR Electronic Intelligence services, plus a golden paper copy master lodged at the British Library for belt and braces (Butler,1995; Mathieu,1995).

I found it difficult to understand the logic of this but apparently its an off the wall strategy to run with the revolution, on the streets as they put it. Came out of a think tank on embracing (Wills,1995) rather than resisting electronic publishing they had way back and is paying handsome intellectual dividends. They simply believe that as with paper journals of old, enthusiasm will wax and wane for e-journals and they will be there to take over the professional support of any title that wants it. Their own origins in paper 30+ years ago were on exactly that basis. Since we are on the upswing not the downswing it's no threat but it's pleasant to know it's there if/ when we stumble.

*So, no peace for the wicked here. Ciao George*

*e-Postcard 12*

## What Can We Hope to Transfer Back for Margaret & Trad U?

*Well Fredrick, our last e-postcard!* We have not forgotten that the terms of our year out here in Internetica were that we had to come back with two Action Plans, one for Trad U and the second for Relationship Consultancy Inc. Nor I imagine have you, and we have been dropping hints already!

Firstly, Margaret is determined to finish her practitioner DBA and has agreed with the Dean here, who is her supervisor, that the development of the PEERNet concept shall be the focus, linked as it is with procuring quality articles for publication. She wants to use us at Trad U as well as the Faculty at U of N as prototype campus based Authors' Clubs sponsored by the Literati Club itself (Wills & Wiles, 1996). Sounds off-the-wall but with the priority these days to do more and better research, it could well ring the right bell. There are one or two prototypes already in Malaysia and the UK so we won't be 100% guinea pigs.

For her Partnership consultancy she foresees a wave of workshops with authors, both from academe and from corporate enterprises both on how to contribute towards and gain benefit from authoring, and also how to excel at abstracting/extracting of intelligence from the Internet. Here she expects to be deeply involved in the population of Intranet systems in corporates, as well as making specific use of the QualNet Forum the publisher already offers and ANBAR Electronic Intelligence services in quality per se.

For George, the smartest plan discussed was to request a sabbatical funded this time by U of N to give him time to digest it all and make sure the ifp Proceedings journal from IMC is effectively launched. But without too much reflection we agreed the real challenge was at Trad U. So, it's going to be an all out effort to get communities of interest and forums going from the Trad U campus. We have talked the publisher here into him becoming what they call the Convenor-in-Chief for Marketing and Logistics. The Dean at U of N is going to work



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along with him too. All the editors of titles clustered in marketing and logistics are being invited to be regular Convenors, running a chat line/authors feedback/conferencing service as an adjunct to the regular journal publication. George has the further remit to find Convenors at Trad U if they are willing to stand up and be counted for Human Resource Management, Strategic Management and of all things Asia Pacific Management. Whether that is expecting too much too soon at Trad U we would not know but you did say in your FaxBack that some of our colleagues are looking livelier and anxious to score a point or two. Internet fame beckons!

To assist it all along, the publisher runs an Internet Convenors' Forum for all Convenors, would you believe. The equivalent of the ifp for the e-journals so to speak. Anyway, we have both joined in its discussions of late and it functions very well as a support mechanism with occasional f2f as well. There was a big meeting here for 2 days in fact last January. And the publishers themselves give a great deal of routine support, simply picking up the gurus, so to speak, for vital but clearly defined work only. They are sufficiently realistic about the stereotypical academic's adherence to schedules to have a piece work payment rate too: no piece on time, no payment; three misses and you're off the team. I think we already subscribe to Internet Research journal, which they publish both electronically and on paper, and they summarise the Proceedings of the Convenors' Forum there from time to time as well as dissertation projects from within their own Internet Research & Development Department. They have produced some ground breaking stuff on evaluating Virtual Conferences (Heal, 1996) and Cool Sites (Binns, 1996) there too. They are great believers in the learning organisation model of management (Reeves, 1995).

Finally, Fredrick, I am determined to put all my own programmes on the Internet linked with the ANBAR Electronic Intelligence services. I shall run it in parallel with the taught courses but expect the team in Continuing Education to be more than happy to use it for their distance learning students and to incorporate the whole Web Forum technology just like U of N. The beauty of it all is there is virtually no development cost and Margaret and I have both picked up enough knowledge of html to be able to set our offiders to work with the course materials disks as they stand.

So, both of us have decided to return without any grand plan for what the Partnership or Trad U at large should do, but with a determination to act as converts and to welcome help from anyone who wants to get stuck in. Any volunteers, Fredrick, apart from you that is?

*Greatly looking forward to getting away from these on-line recipes and down the road for a Trad curry . See you as soon as we can,*

*Margaret & George*

***The George Report to Business School Colleagues at Trad University:  
Reflection on what has been and a picture of what can be at  
Trad U as a great scholarly institution***

***Centuries of stony sleep***

Scholarly publishing as an industry has scarcely changed in nature for hundreds of years. Although innovations in typesetting, papermaking, inks and despatch systems have incrementally altered the way things are done, the things themselves pretty well stayed the same.

The story of the university industry has uncanny parallels to that of learned publishing. They are indeed bedfellows, sometimes uneasy ones, and without the one the other would hardly exist. Universities first came to be in the Middle Ages and again have hardly changed in form or function for five hundred years.

Initiatives such as the British Open University did provide a change in the notion of what a university is and does, thirty or so years ago. For the first time university education was democratised into “open learning”. The Open University (OU) was one of the great additions to our social infrastructure – a government-underwritten, open-access university where if you were 60 years old and taking care of the house in a village in Scotland, and fancied taking a degree course in the History of Philosophy – you could. All you did was paid your (modest) fee, registered, and followed a system of TV-transmitted tutorials (sent out at off-peak hours) plus worked your way through set books and course materials, plus attended optional summer school. The OU set a global pattern many others have since emulated.

It changed the dynamics of education from an exclusive paradigm to an inclusive one. The exclusive paradigm said that if you were rich enough to travel to one of the great seats of learning and maintain yourself there for several years whilst you studied, and you were deemed worthy of being there, you could go. Capacity was small, limited by the campus and the number of suitable teachers – and the need to maintain exclusivity of course. The OU and democratised open learning offered a theoretically limitless capacity – through the medium of television one teacher could lecture to a million students simultaneously.

The democratisation of higher education led to a need, still largely unfulfilled, for democratisation of scholarly publishing. Instead of full-time scholars poring over esoteric tracts, consumers became people who had many other things in their lives, and people with vastly varying degrees of prior knowledge. The exclusive publishing paradigm, mirroring the universities which symbiotically

existed alongside them, said that if you were clever enough to understand the stuff and able to gain access to the library to find it, you could study it. Democratised open learning threw out a challenge that said – without “dumbing down”, let us present information we can learn from in a manner and in media accessible to ordinary people.

At the back of these two great industries, and in a way the glue which binds them, is a third one – the library. Again, just as a publisher and a professor from 1497 would have some familiarity with the roles of publisher and professor in 1997, so a five-hundred year old librarian would be able to walk into most libraries in the world (most particularly academic libraries) and be on familiar turf.

This potted history of our great institutional trinity of learning – the scholarly publisher, the university and the library – is provided as a counterpoint for what is to come next. For here at the end of a millennium which spawned these institutions, we are standing on the edge of the most profound change in their entire history. One more profound than the printing press or the Open University’s democratisation of learning, as it affects all three simultaneously and, literally, earth-shakingly. So much so that the publisher, librarian and professor of just a few years ago would have more in common with his or her counterpart from half a millennium away in the past than with those of a few years hence. Everything has changed, changed utterly, as the great prophetic poet WB Yeats put it.

As we stand on the brink, with a foot in the old world and a foot in the new, the challenges for those of us in these three institutions are frightening in their profundity. We can no more stop the metaphorical tide than Canute could. But our actions and ideas may shape its flow, if we choose to try. If we choose not to, our impact will have been as footsteps in the sand, washed away by change. But the opportunity is to leave a legacy which may shape our great scholarly trinity for the future, just so little, but profoundly so.

That is why we believe we must grasp and grapple with the vision, and seek to leverage our wisdom, such as it is, to embrace the future. Otherwise we will have, quite literally, left no mark.

### *What we can and must do now*

Our business must be re-thought. We cannot see tomorrow’s business with yesterday’s eyes. It is time to separate what we do from what we are, and to be again what we are. What we do and have done is no longer appropriate as the driving impetus of the business. We must find new things to do, which reflect more accurately what we are and what we need to be.

Our proposition is that our customers, now and in the future, will increasingly seek an interactive relationship with the knowledge they consume, and that this will increasingly be perceived as more satisfactory than the one-way relationships they currently have with publishers, universities and libraries. It is on that proposition that we will try to point the way forwards in tangible terms.

## 1. *Virtual communities*

We must create virtual communities around areas of current and future activity, led by us but shaped and moulded (and populated) by editors, editorial advisors, past and potential future authors. The most valuable currency we will have to trade is knowledge. We must therefore concentrate on the suppliers and manufacturers of knowledge, and ensure that the supply remains fresh and plentiful. We can do that by:

- i. Providing the wherewithal for these virtual communities to exist, via well-designed Internet discussion forums, the purpose of which is to aid the creation and sharing of new items of knowledge
- ii. Understanding the motivations to publish and the difficulties of so doing, and ensuring that we are providing acceptable validation systems (e.g. properly conducted community review, listings in various indices etc.); with help and guidance in crafting an article; and that our editors are effectively mentored and managed to be able to build relationships and referrals with authors, and perform to acceptable service levels
- iii. Providing guided access to our databases for research and data gathering for our authors. We have a structure ( e.g. Literati Club) which can be further leveraged. If we really believe our knowledge suppliers to be of paramount importance to our continued existence, we must treat them as first class passengers whilst they are freely giving of their valuable commodity to us
- iv. We must further encourage the supply of valuable knowledge materials from the university structures we manage and influence. We should design patterns that will ‘harvest’ the outcomes from action learning and action research programmes in publishable form rather than hope they turn out that way, and we should encourage our partner institutions and others besides to do similarly. We should coach our students in creating publishable outputs. Much real learning and insight is lost to the wider community because it fails to be captured. It gets lost in what we normally term the ‘grey’ literature. We can hypothesise that tangible output through publication would be good for the university in improving students’ post-programme appreciation and loyalty, as well as acting as an effective publicity channel for the university and its courses of study. All programmes should be designed into and around the virtual “knowledge manufacturing” communities described above. (We have the prototype in Project Harvest already.)

## 2. *Brand management*

We have carefully created academic brands over many years. We must devote much strategic brain power to their function in tomorrow’s world. Whether we should abandon them as no longer relevant, manage them to accrue short-term gain, or leverage them into an e-presence is a strategic decision which cannot take shape by default and neglect. It is clear that publishing will sooner rather than later lose coherence if it continues to be driven around the brand titles as they are now, just as it will if it is built solely around the annual advance subscription as the sole unit of income. That will not be how our customers

will see the world, and that will not be how our farsighted competitors will act. Our databases are – we now see only too well – more than an agglomeration of brands and cannot be managed and sold for long in such a manner.

### **3. *Database management***

Our database of articles (presuming we limit ourselves to articles and their derivatives) will prove to be the mainspring of the knowledge/learning business if it is to survive and prosper. We have discussed inflows above, and made reference to a change of emphasis from traditional journal brands to the database.

The database must spawn products and services – as many as we can create, as their creation and distribution is an incremental expenditure only after they have been assimilated into our database. Indeed, we have no need to create them at all – we can give our customers the tools to create them on their own.

Examples are:

- i. Traditional journal brands, albeit supported by a web of communities of interest around them
- ii. Access by keyword search to articles, charged per access, per download, charged by monthly flat fee, or any or all of these combinations. We must find efficient and economical means to deal with multiplicity of access charging and collection and not be hindered by present lack of ability or reluctance to do so
- iii. Access to subject or industry niched areas, selected by us or auto-generated for a customer, supplied electronically or on paper or by combination, as “virtual journals”
- iv. Secondary products derived from the database, in a multiplicity of forms, as brand spin-offs or as v-journal support
- v. Institutional subscriptions initially to the whole database, followed by a continuing top-up subscription

### **4. *Database enrichment***

Not only do publishers trade their own products; they trade those of other knowledge-gatherers.

- i. Already a nursery for e-journals has been created in the Internet Free-Press which will become, through investment in promotion and publicity, a further means of both capturing raw materials and exploring brand parameters and innovative publishing practice in the e-world.
- ii. We also trade other materials through Anbar Electronic Intelligence, albeit reliant on paper for much delivery still.
- iii. We must seek other ways to add to our collection of knowledge at low or no cost. Copyright ownership of electronically disseminated materials is emerging as a key debate. It is likely that more authors will seek to retain their own



copyright. We must swim with this tide rather than against it by encouraging authors to retain personal copyright and accrue royalty income from accesses from our database as a radical “New Deal” with scholarly authors.

- iv. Knowledge also arrives and is greatly facilitated from other directions – at conferences, lectures, seminars, consultancy interventions. Wherever knowledge is created and captured – we can and should be there, helping if needs be with creation and capture, trading it ourselves.

#### **5. *The new library***

Our databases are designed with library tools, and must continue in an ever-simpler, more cost-effective and more accessible manner. We have started the process very effectively with keywords, typology, quality ratings. We must both validate and adjust our systems and continue to think from a learner’s and researcher’s point of view in accessing our databases. We have taken over much of the function of the library and librarian, and our current and future relationships with these institutions and people must be carefully and properly thought through.

#### **6. *The new university***

Our databases are already providing the impetus for an extension to democratised open learning, supported by e-mail and Web forum discussions, e-tutored globally by (often) the same authors who write for us and recommend our products to their institutions.

#### **7. *Virtual institutions***

The knowledge and network of people we are creating can be formed into entities some of which we are still to conceive of. However, it seems clear that they will engulf both the institutions of higher learning and the professions as we know them now.

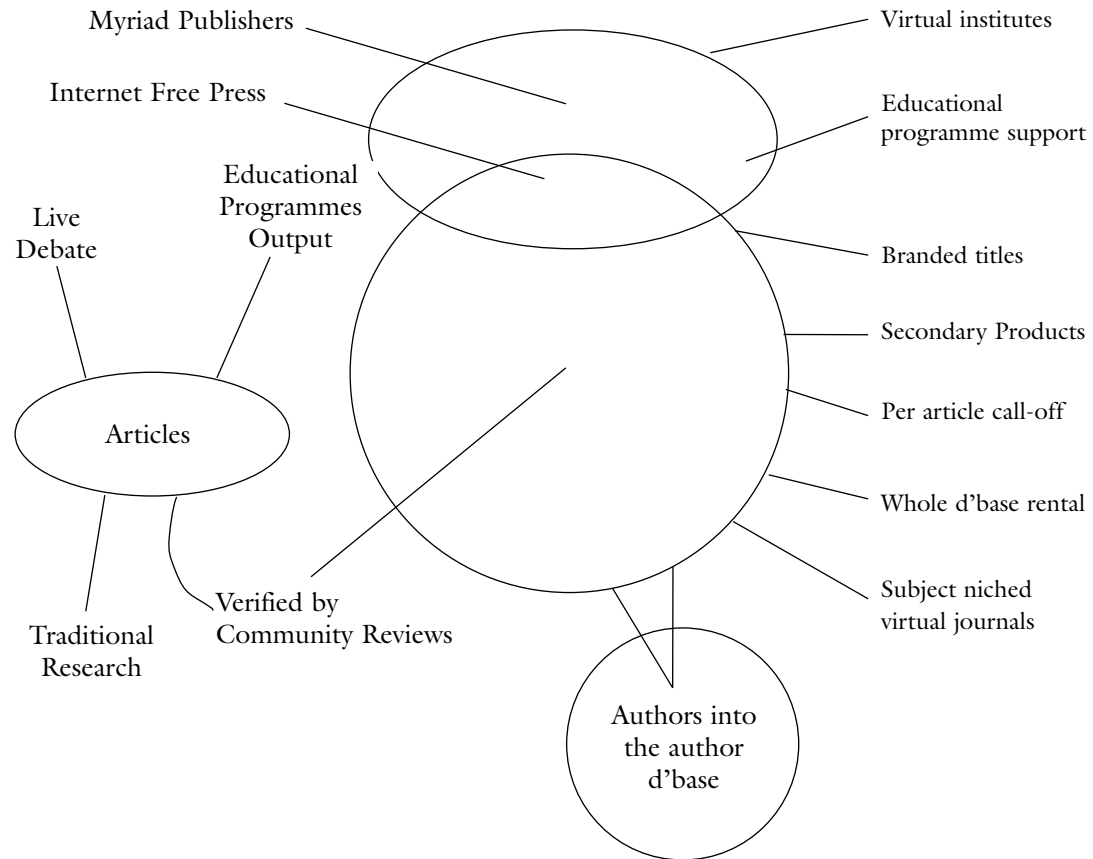
### ***Conclusion – a new way***

None of this is beyond us. Much of it we are doing now. What we must do is seize the moment intellectually and indeed as social or private investors, before it passes us by. Our organisations will be like fish out of water if we think of them and run them on pre-electronic lines in the electronic era. Much as we must of course engage in tangible activities towards future re-shaping, we must do something more difficult and more challenging than that. We must learn to think in a new way. Can we?

*George wishes to record his thanks to John and Peter at U of Norbert, Internética, for crystallising the issues reported here in discussion with him and Margaret before they returned home to Trad University.*

Figure 1

## The Database (keyworded etc)



## ***Static and Dynamic Quality Assurance in the Internet age: is there any comfort to be had?***

You asked, I promised, so here are my observations and conclusions as the result of my time away in Internetica with George.

When reflecting on the QA challenges for our organisations in the Internet age I found myself engaging in something closer to a philosophy seminar than one on which quality tools and techniques we should adopt. But then, we must understand the philosophical base from which we proceed.

As a quality assurance pragmatist that makes me both comfortable and uncomfortable. Comfortable because I know from long experience that to start with operational rushing around usually ends in strategic tears. More haste, less speed, as my mother used to say. Uncomfortable because of a propensity for action which I increasingly find means more than pontification, debate, meetings about meetings, memoranda about memoranda. Let me see if I can reach equilibrium amongst these forces of discomfort; discuss for a moment two other competing forces which need to find equilibrium; then move on to some recommendations as to what can be done. I say “can”, but I think I will find myself saying “must” as I go on.

Ever since the beginning of rational thought, humans have sought to create, and to preserve. These are the great metaphorical, spiritual complementarities and opposites; the yin and the yang. Creation says – what we have is not good enough. We must change it, destroy it if necessary. Preservation says – yes, of course it’s good enough; it’s worked fine for all these years, hasn’t it? Sometimes the preservers win, for a while. Sometimes the creators win, for a while. And when the forces of creation prevail, as they inevitably do, then the preservers move back in and say – thank you very much, that was exactly what we needed, now we will make sense of it all. And so the struggle, the cycle, begins again. Those who create and those who preserve are naturally antithetical (look at revolutions) but necessary. Without preservation there would be only anarchy; without creation there would be only stagnation and death. The American writer and philosopher Robert Pirsig calls these two forces the static and the dynamic.

See for example: <http://webpages.marshall.edu/~striz1/quality/>

In seeking to make sense of the electronic revolution we can see static and dynamic systems in action clearly. I only present the philosophy lesson to see if we can distance ourselves from the day to day excitement and reach some kind of strategic high ground.

### *Assuring the dynamic*

Without dynamic forces which irritate, destroy, create dis-organization, expense and trouble, our organizations will die. People able to harness dynamic forces are hard to manage, sometimes unpopular, annoying. Yet we must nurture them.

The forces which create and those which preserve are not just different; they are antithetical. We can manage creativity right out of our organizations all too easily; we can impose too-heavily structured systems; we can squeeze people's time and space. It has been called the corporate immune syndrome. Effectively we motivate creators to conform or get out. Some, exhausted, will conform; the rest will get out. Then we are lost, at the mercy of crisis as a change driver.

Quality assuring the dynamic is as important managerially as quality assuring the static. We have no need and no excuse any more to over-centralise. We can and must work with creative people across cultures and geographical distances; we should look to manage our dynamic forces outside of our static centralities. As I sometimes remind people, and I sometimes need to be reminded; we create and manage systems; they don't create and manage us unless we allow them to.

I heard a story about the Sony Corporation. Sony have three teams working on each of their products. One team works on incremental improvements – how to make what is just that little bit better. One team works on support systems and products – how to support what is a little better too. A third team works on actually making what is obsolete, by looking at customer usage, and at changing trends. They are paid to think and to play. But Sony is a large corporation and most of ours are much smaller. Should we pay people to think and to play; to destroy what is by creating something new? Can we afford to do it, and can we afford not to? When things change, as they are changing now, it is not a rhetorical question, but one we must ask with due seriousness.

### *Assuring the static*

Without static forces, which are seen as stultifying, bureaucratic, dead-weight wet blankets on our creative fires, our organizations will never be able to move beyond fleeting glimpses of good ideas. People able to harness static forces can be cold, unimaginative, slow, negative and resistant to change. Yet we must nurture them.

We have few excuses for not assuring the reliability and managing the variability of what we can, easily, assure. Systems such as ISO 9000 are well-documented, low-risk and readily implementable. Bringing disciplines to areas which respond to discipline isn't just good for business. It's good for our own sanity and self-respect too. Most people don't want to do waste work or sloppy work. If we don't assure the assurable, we will leave little space for creativity, and for managing the difficult psychological task of seeking equilibrium between the static and the dynamic.

There is nothing intrinsically dynamic about the Internet; about e-publishing, or e-education. Some parts of the process of design, invention, human interaction, or just simply thinking hard, are dynamic and will best be managed without

our organizational controls, yet linked to them. But many of our electronic activities are routinisable, and can fall readily under routine assurance systems.

The principles of quality assurance are simple; understand correct specifications and produce to them; understand causes of variation from specification and control them, prevent them from causing random difficulties; leave an audit trail and use audit data to improve performance. We can do all this creatively and humanely.

### *Buzzing and Humming; quality assuring Internet activities*

I wrote previously (e-Postcard 3) that there is “the hope of getting cost effective linkages and lateral thoughts. But they are not overly optimistic about great results because of the earlier view that a lot of attendees do not want to contribute. They just want to visit and look and maybe learn .. and why not? Nothing new in that at all but we all wonder whether the Internet has got some ingredient that can set a new pattern alight. It’s going to require some lateral thinking. The analogy they make here is that an important part of any traditional conference is face-to-face in the bar, lobby and the like ...”

An exchange of e-mail is not the same as a conversation leaning on a bar or over coffee in a hotel lobby. There are no social dynamics; no body language, no tone, no eye contact. Interaction can of course take place, build and grow, but on an intellectual, analytical level closer to a Socratic dialectic than a spontaneous chat. Internet buzz isn’t a replication of face to face, just as video-conferencing isn’t, just as a telephone conference call isn’t. It is what it is.

It may be that assuring the interactive, conversational buzz requires similar disciplines to assuring the archival hum; archiving, search tools, managed links. In searching for answers, we must look in the right places.

### *Next steps*

Over the next two years we need to seek stable anchors in times of change. Our systems can and must become impeccable, with waste work and waste effort managed down to minimal levels. We know how to do this, and it is time to grasp the nettle and do it. We need to devote high-level thought and debate to the scope of a QA system certified to ISO 9000 standards, which is especially designed to take on our Internet activities as well as our more familiar ones; our dynamics as well as the static’s we are more familiar with. Having done so, in depth but not at length, we need to be making our systems shipshape; writing specifications, managing to them, controlling (not necessarily eliminating) variances, auditing the activity, improving based on the data we collect.

As we found in our work with IMC’s QA systems, we must think of ourselves as service providers, rather than as controllers of everyone we encounter, and establish systems to assure the quality of our services to customers and, increasingly, suppliers. It is from this perspective that we should address our voyage towards ISO 9000 and beyond.

At the same time, without wishing to be overly paradoxical, we must seek to destabilise what we are doing, by surrounding ourselves with people able to think outside of our own limits. We need to be working with innovative, top-class thinkers amongst our own staff, our suppliers and our customers; to be rewarding and encouraging (not managing and controlling) them, and leveraging the capability of the Internet for remote meetings and brainstorming. Those amongst our own people who we believe to be radical, dynamic thinkers, we should deliberately distance from the organization and force them into using the technology to its fullest extent, whether on temporary sabbatical or permanent out-placement.

In our use of the dynamic, particularly on the Internet, we should be focusing on our skills in information capture and access provision; on our skills as archivists, librarians and added value publishers. The more we take away creativity from routinisable activities, the more space we leave for creativity to flower where it needs to.

George says that conclusion is one he reached as a young academic 30 years ago in relation to marketing and sales activities. And he says he picked it up from the balancing of production management and research and development. So it seems to be a universal phenomenon alright.

Our action plan therefore seems straightforward to conceptualise! We need to nail down the jelly when we feel its going round in circles and let the fascinating flowers bloom. So where's the jelly? Where are the fascinating flowers? And are people with the congruent work preferences at work on each, feeling comfortable and understood?

We have got far enough now with the Internet to start managing it professionally just like everything else. No need to indulge the lads any longer. Lets look for the business models and the roi. That's what to tell our clients and to show them how.

*Margaret*

## **I Dreamt I was a Global Tutor**

*Donna:* I trust the Dean's job is as enjoyable still as when Margaret and I left U of Norbert. I'm sorry it's so long since we were last in touch but I have an alibi you'll like. Here at Trad U we have had the most amazing developments. Can scarcely believe it. We knew Fredrick, the former Dean here and a great family friend, had been passing our E-postcards and FaxBacks around, but at this month's meeting Trad U's B School Faculty was buzzing with revolutionary talk! Some of the least likely Faculty here were arguing that we should take an 'offensive/defensive' strategic position on the future of the Internet in education and training. Sounds good!

It transpired that two of them had been approached by their text book publishers for the electronic rights. Under these arrangements their titles would be made available (on the far side of a credit card actuated barrier ) chapter by chapter on the Internet. But what really set them all buzzing was that they had also been invited to design an MBA core course framework to go with their texts to be offered by one of the top accredited distance learning B Schools in the world. If they were willing to offer tutorial feedback to those taking such programs and using interactive Web Forums, an astonishing \$US 250 fee per student was available. (Sounds like the Virtual Institution we discussed in FaxBack 2, Figure 1 is here already.)

So the debate that is now raging here at Trad U is whether we should tolerate/allow/even encourage Faculty to undertake such tutorial activities privately or insist that they put all such undreamt of opportunities through the B School. That conjures up shades of the old debates in the 1960's about consultancy activities outwith the B School of course.

This time it looks as though we will make the right decision. The two Professors who have been asked by their publishers in this way were the first to spot that they could not cope with large student numbers and would need the sort of support that other Faculty could give anyway. But more than that, they asked why the B School itself could not undertake what the

**By air mail  
Par avion**

*Dr Donna Hope*

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*Dean of Business*

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*Norbert University*

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*Internetica*

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publishers seemed intent on doing? So, building on so much of what Margaret and I learnt from our time at U of N, we proposed and got immediate acceptance of the notion that an Internet Research & Development Centre should be established.

Its called the IRDC for short, and here's a further surprise: it is going to have three equity elements in it rather than hoping or waiting for a tranche of government funding. Element 1 will be use of the B School's assets and consumables, element 2 will be a straight cash offer for shares amongst Faculty members and the third is to be what are known here as 'sweat' shares – achieved for actually doing something electronic.

We have no idea what level of resources we will need and even the finance Faculty are bemused at the prospect of crafting a budget for Year 1. The best idea to date seems to be to take it project by project. And you won't be surprised to hear that we are going for the MBA core courses as our starting point. Margaret has already talked to ANBAR Management Intelligence and done a deal with them to keyword each module just as you have in IMC at U of N. They said we are the 9th B School now to join with them. They began working with Canadian School of Management in Toronto only last month and have new clients coming up in Dubai, Bulgaria, Switzerland and Bosnia. The ANBAR drive is led by an ex- merchant seaman with an MBA called Eric! Seems the nautical background made him comfortable riding the waves of the future.

Anyway, back to budgets. What do you think of our IRDC notion? And what budgeting processes do you use? I know that your Faculty all do their Internet activities with you because that IS the mainstream work of U of N and of IMC in particular. But what experiences are there elsewhere of it being treated as an internal or an external activity by B Schools?

Sorry to ask so many questions .... but we need any inputs you have to offer. Its all so new here and so ambiguous it will soon drive us crazy. The decision to go for the Core MBA courses as the first activities at least means we will talk about real issues in the coming months rather than chattering whilst Rome burns.

Amazing is it not how lateral events/external enemies end up achieving progress/uniting us for a common purpose? I could have argued the case for ever at Faculty meetings without much success I suspect. One word from a publisher and the decks are cleared for action.

*Greatly looking forward to your reply. Best wishes George*



*e-Postcard 14*

## Internet R&D Centre's Secret Weapons

*George:* It was good to hear from you and to learn that the publishing world is providing the fillip to get you on the move. That is not an unusual pattern because they are amongst the largest investors with flexible strategies and an eye for potential real returns. The other major players, who you and Margaret both met when you were here, are the former Library Subscription agents like Ebsco, Blackwells and Faxons/Dawson. Our advice to your colleagues is to go with the opportunities with the publishers to become Global Tutors from their serialised texts, but at the same time to advance as you are suggesting via Internet R&D Centre. The strength of course of this latter strategy is to get all Faculty double benefits from the system – greater fame and greater fortune. Trad U is well advised to collect a royalty or campus tax, but to allow free access to its facilities as the revolution unfolds.

We found that there are two parallel strands that have to be budgeted for – the first is finding the market out there for whatever particular services will be generated; the second is keeping up with the emergent technologies. On the second count, i.e. new technologies, my advice is do not attempt to create new ones. There are very clever computer folk out there with megabucks to spend. Put all the effort into developing the customised applications you want and which will make life much more bearable for the users.

ANBAR's site is a very good example nowadays of how they have worried their way to find most elements they need. They have bought in technology from Reed Technology in Germantown, Va. and outsourced a lot of the page graphics work. Their creative marketing has gone into their *League Tables* and their *Hall of Fame/Citations of Excellence*.

One of the best ways forward for IRDC will be to have its own web site and to have a regular column there that surveys the '**new technologies**' that are relevant and shows how they can be used effectively. You might even put edited versions of these e-Postcard exchanges up at the IRDC site. We seem to be roving over the important implementation issues well enough to be worth others eavesdropping on us.



*Dr George Advent*

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*Professor of Marketing*

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*TRAD University*

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*TU 1900*

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However, you may by now be wondering why I headed this card Secret Weapons; anyway I hope so. There are two not so secret lessons that we have learnt the hard way here in Internetica over the past couple of years.

**Lesson 1** is that it takes creative/innovative folk to build a site but upholder/maintainers and controller inspectors to keep it good and populated. As such, most of the teams here have gone through a metamorphosis and are no longer quite such a gung ho wild bunch as they were. Derek says that's because they and we are just a little bit older. It could be but like most husbands I think he has missed the point. The job requires routinisation of 80% of what goes on and unless that happens all our site visitors find the site in a state of too much flux. We can flux away as much as needs be, and don't get me wrong and think I am saying the creative days are gone, but it only needs to be 20% that bright and new. The rest should be reassuringly professional and predictable.

**Lesson 2** is that regardless of how 'good' the site might become, or how many Tiger Citations it might get, if the process role we now call Internet Marketor here is not fully staffed and sustained, with monthly accountabilities, the e-messages simply don't get created and linked out there at Search engines and the crowds don't find their way spontaneously to the site. The undoubted exemplar here is Blanchard & Barbs work at their *Asia Pacific Management Forum*.

Now you might say that your initial plans are modest and that the work will be on making a better deal for your captive student market. But please be assured that the right Internet Marketor will be actively selling places/recruiting for the programmes themselves. And that also means much more extensive use of the texts colleagues have penned at Trad U..

*Hope these comments are of help as you get cracking. Best wishes to you both from Derek and I. When are we going to see you and Margaret over here again?*

*Donna*

## Emergent Global Columnists on the Net

*Donna:* Your two lessons/Internet Secret Weapons in E-postcard 14 set us thinking hard here. Some of the Faculty have got best selling texts that are used all over the world and others a series of titles that sell just 2000 copies and don't go for a reprint. And again, others said they did well on citation indices for their articles and conference papers and others not at all well ... without any apparent reason for the difference. Which is meant to be my oblique way of sharing our emergent thoughts on how to create and sustain a great community of interest on the Internet.

How, we argued, did a text get and hold a global rather than a campus/country market share and how did others flare up, sell well and then pass quickly away. And via the citation analysis, what were the dynamics of word of mouth so to speak and did nothing succeed like success? Naturally we did not reach any world shattering conclusions, so we decided to review the sites that the people at MCB University Press and their associated network have created and look at what they were about.

We started with the *Asia Pacific Management Forum*, the exemplar you suggested. We concluded that their secret seemed to be a great blend of stolid/text book type material in their archive but good buzz via their news items/pick of the week articles and their emergent global columnists from 'Blanchard's Travelogue' and the universal dilemmas and joys of 'An Expatriate Asian's Diary in America' to 'Boyes Asian Code Words'. This latter phenomenon fascinates us enormously now. Its a logical halfway house between email top of the head responses and the tough going of Internet Conferences as captured at the Virtual Conference Centre. Its a great format which we think can act as a useful magnet to bring interested folk back regularly. Its en route to create a breed of Global Columnists.

We went off and looked around the other MCB University Press Global Columns and reckoned that they are on to something very powerful. By using these Columns as a frequently amusing/anecdotal but serious commentary point on their Forums the whole thing becomes more than just a library like site. They must have done a lot of hard thinking about how to make their sites more than the virtual equivalent of a Library Stack section.

By air mail  
Par avion

*Dr Donna Hope*

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*Dean of Business*

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*Norbert University*

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*Internetica*

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*FUT 2000*

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It would be invidious to choose between them but for all the Faculty "Write Stuff" from Robert Brown in Australia was so close to home it was bound to be a hit. He uses humour, wry comment, whimsy, dramatic irony as well as jokes which seldom travel too well between cultures with great effect. He's obviously been at work some considerable while.

Some of the more recent columns are equally fascinating with their own whimsical positioning like *Mungo Park's* focus on Global Marketing and *Burke and Wills* writing on Logistics. They both have considerable warmth and seem unafraid of intimate comment with which quite a few readers might well disagree! *Tales from the Wild Frontier* seems to be an interesting alternative angle which has less about Quality Management than we expected but reads well. On balance we felt a stronger albeit whimsical connection with the subject is likely to be more powerful but who knows yet? I suppose Hit-meter tracking technology will soon tell them all.

Some of us have resolved to volunteer to have a go at becoming columnists on the wave of additional Forums MCB University Press has just launched and reports it will dynamically populate with ISO 9002 disciplines in place by January 1998. They gave us the full list and I'm enclosing it here just in case any of your colleagues at U of N want to volunteer too. They don't pay a fee by the way! Their message is that they give us a Global Soapbox, good *Notes of Guidance from the Internet R & D Centre*, and finally they throw in archive searching gratis ... which truly is a great bonus. The bad news is if you miss the ISO 9002 deadlines you get sacked at once and that's why they keep the copyright on the pseudonym for the column and I suppose you can't blame them for that.

The full list of MCB University Press sponsored Forums wanting either their first or additional ( they say they can't see any limitations yet!) Global Columnists are as follows:

- Africa Regional Forum
- Airport Business Forum
- Australasia and South Pacific Regional Forum
- China Regional Forum
- FINA Petrochemical Industry Forum
- Financial Management & Services Global Forum
- Global Education Forum
- Global Forum for Police Studies
- Global Healthcare and Environment Forum
- Hospitality & Tourism Global Forum
- Human Resource Network
- Information Management Global Forum
- Internet Free-Press
- Internet Research & Development Centre
- The Library Link Forum
- Marketing and Logistics Forum
- Operations and Production Global Forum
- Property Management and Facilities Global Forum
- Qualnet
- TopMan Global Forum
- The Virtual Conference Centre

They are an extremely broad church at MCB University Press as you can see, and they are all at different stages of development, but that's life on the Internet. Emergent itself, with none of us truly sure what will or will not work well.

Lets have your own thoughts when you have time. The *IMC site* you maintain is already a world leader for B Schools of course. What are your development plans for it? I see you have just linked up with the *Canadian School of Management* too. I suspect that putting them up on the Internet in six short months from a standing start might well have lessons for us here as we trundle forward.

*Best wishes from Margaret; as ever, George*

*e-Postcard 16*

## Emergent Master Teachers on the Internet

*George:* You got to me with your *Emergent Global Columnists* last month. That was a postcard that set our bars rattling over here. I had not realised just how far MCB UP had got with their Forums. There are still a few missing links I saw but the use of ISO 9002 disciplines looks like an excellent way to be sure the frequent visitor gets the urge to pop back and see what else has happened. And congratulations to that Daniel Newman who crystallised the *Guidance for Internet Columnists*.

Anyway, on to the new order here now. We've instituted a new grade of Faculty member and give salary bonuses for top ratings. It goes to colleagues here at IMC who master the new/emergent skills of making a Web Forum into an effective virtual classroom.

We have a fair number of distance education students who in the early days had a one-on-one relationship with their tutors, literally through the post and by phone. We never headed for video-conferencing because the students could not handle it at their end although some of the new kit coming along will transform that. But with the Web Forums we have got to the stage of insisting that all students must discuss their assignments with one another as well as with their tutors. This means the faculty are developing their coursewares to have trigger questions to be mulled over and their role is now more of that of a moderator than a teacher, so to speak.

The contributions coming from the students have, as you might expect, astounded several of my colleagues. I heard one the other day ask why some of his students took the programme at all if they knew as much as they seemed to from their discussions going along.

Anyway, the secret seems to lie in the trigger questions and then well timed interventions, even summings up, by the faculty. And of course, the old fashioned discipline of ye olde class register! Every faculty member is now getting contracted for so many log-ins per week and the students are required to do likewise. And up to 20% of the final assignment marks are being allotted to the ideas and learning from fellow students in the virtual classroom.

We have just done it for our *1st Global Doctoral Set*.



*Dr George Advent*

*Professor of Marketing*

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And, wait for it, the uphill battle to get them all along to the Intramural we expect each year has turned into a demand, almost, from them to tell the faculty what they want to discuss and a nigh 100% turnout at the Intramural without a single chaser. They all simply agreed in the virtual classroom what they wanted and where and when they would be doing it.

Plus ça change ... but I long for la même chose; or am I getting old? Actually I wouldn't have it any other way.

By the way ... I saw the work your Internet R&D man, Noel Wynder, has done on Internet Skills and Communications. Quite excellent. We better watch out here on The Other Side. You'll be flying past us soon if we don't take care. Any more good stuff like that coming along?

*Best wishes from Derek and D. Donna*

*e-Postcard 17*

## The Quest for Business Models

*Donna:* We are going to adopt your *Master Teacher on the Internet* approach, and will be highlighting both best practice and practitioners each year in future. We are also tackling another issue on which you might have some experience. It's a variation on how can we get Internet visitors to our site to pay for the services we offer, rather than regarding them as complimentary. In fact, we've painted ourselves into a corner that requires some bold lateral thinking to get out. Not the only ones I guess.

During our experimental prototyping phase for our Internet programmes we have sensibly quoted low fees to cover our own learning as well as our clients. Now we have polished our performance we have got to get a realistic pricing policy in place that covers our ongoing costs and development, as well as recovering the initial investment. In a word, we have got to levy higher fees.

Clients naturally want to keep to the level we collected during prototyping, asserting that they have helped us get to where we are anyway – and I have to agree there is some undeniable truth in that.

Our analysis is that the value we are now adding, not only via the action learning educational process but also via the induction of many client managers to the potential of the Internet per se, is well ahead of our competitors. And when you add to this our virtual library/intelligence linkage from ANBAR-EMERALD which you led us to, we are world class. As such, the client has to be brought face to face with the actuality of our enduring relationship sooner rather than later.

The mistake we clearly made in the prototype days was not to be strongly up front about the follow-on fees once we had got to smooth functioning. But we were so keen to gain the business and to be able to advance the emergent activities that we were unwilling to be that open.

The compromisers here argue that we should be able to build so many more clients in future that we can afford to accommodate our old friends at bargain – even loss

By air mail  
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*Dr Donna Hope*

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making – fees. But you know me as a marketor to the bone and I don't truly believe we need to do that. It's cowardice. We are going to share the facts and the truths with the clients concerned and get them to help us solve the challenge. There are possibly a number of suggestions they can make that will enable us to play a non-zero sum game together.

The abiding truth here seems to be that the better we deliver the relationship marketing process, the higher the expense incurred. So the discussion of what level of relationship service is optimal for both parties needs to be a mature one, involving sharing of ideas, needs and wants from both sides. In the Gadarene rush to build relationships it is all too easy to create facile arrangements that cost more than the value they deliver.

As soon as I say this, however, it reminds me of the sort of tricks I so despise amongst service purveyors who use relationships to engender anxieties with their clients/putative clients and then sell a frequently unending relationship of reassurance in its wake. We've got such nonsense running currently on two fronts I can readily think of – Copyright in the Internet and the Year 2000. Both are, of course, substantial issues to be addressed but neither seems to generate much positive thinking. Further, we are all being deliberately alarmed by consultants offering to ward off the evil spirits.

My alternative, therefore, is to eschew any alarmism and focus on the ROI, both for the enterprise itself by using Internet driven action learning management development and for the individual manager's career within and beyond the client. I know we have been weak in this latter area, pandering to a "corporatist approach" to manager development when truly, in the long run, it is each individual's own responsibility.

*Any observations will be most welcome — George*



*e-Postcard 18*

## Invitation to the ‘Virtual Luncheon’

*Donna:* I’ve just had an invitation to *MCB University Press’ Virtual Luncheon*, which they tell me will run buffet style from February 1st till April 30th. The virtuality goes real in London, England, on April 30th for those of us who have shown:

good table manners

great social skills in conversation

profundity as well as verbosity

I gather its the result of their work over the past two years with virtual conferences and congresses for authors/editors/professional groups. What works best is a structured (we have eight themes to chew on) time limited debate, with shoulder tapping to ask for comments when one of us knows the other has something to contribute but has not yet joined in.

It is being organised by MCB University Press’ Literati Club, which we have talked about before (e-Postcard 7). I got the invitation because I have been involved for a year now as an Internet Editor for one of their Quality Management journals, that are accessible via the *Global QualNet Forum*. It has been my task to seek out ‘Cool Sites’ in the quality management field which I then review in the journal itself. The Forum managers go further by collecting and ANBAR grading an even wider range.

Anyway, the Literati Club Chairman, Jonathan Barker has been at work for four years studying how we all use the inputs and outputs of e-publishing and in the run up to the Literati Annual Awards Dinner in London he has ordained it would be well worth bringing all 70+ MCB University Press Internet Editors together for the Virtual Luncheon process.

Obviously we shall be sharing and comparing how we go about it, but Jonathan has several broader themes to debate. Perhaps the biggest of these will be PeerNet (e-Postcard 10) which is currently in trial for a few journals and will shortly be extended more broadly. All the evidence shows that authors welcome the opportunity to consult with and have

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their working drafts commented on by others around the world who have written in the same field and been published in MCB titles. It will take some while I am sure to change habits, but it sure breaks the stranglehold of literary cartels that control all too many academic journals. The whole pattern of re-engineered '*Knowledge Logistics*' has been presented in an intriguing paper just recently written by the Chairman of MCB's Electronic Publishing Division.

As well as looking forward to my virtual buffet luncheon, George and I also looked back over the correspondence we have had over the past year. Its quite amazing how much has happened in such a short space of time. Was there ever such a roller coaster? Perhaps the biggest excitement of all is actually seeing the distance learning mode of action learning study transfered onto the Internet. The way the dyadic pattern of guidance and learning is transformed by peer discussions amongst fellow students is a tonic, and George is adamant that it actually reduces the faculty workload.

I close as ever with a request for you to share your experiences with us. George and his colleagues have resolved to build an extensive Internet site for TradU. Although they have the template available, offered by the *Virtual University* developed by Eric Sandelands, and have got more dendrograms scattered around the study than I can ever recall for any previous mega-project, they have not yet summoned up enough courage to get started. They are forever afraid they may get it wrong and only find out a year later. Help!

As ever, *Fredrick*