

Henning Bergenholtz

From a Young Danish Child to a Grown Up Adult International Journal

50 issues, or 25 years ago, the first HERMES appeared. But like prior to the birth of other babies, there were some preparations to be made. My co-editor Finn Frandsen and I made a plan for a new Danish journal for specialised language. The first issue was planned to bring only contributions from staff members of 'Det Erhvervsproglige Fakultet' (Faculty of Modern Languages) at the Aarhus School of Business in Denmark. Later on, it was planned to publish papers from other Danish and Scandinavian universities. But in the first place the papers should be written in Danish, alternatively in Swedish or Norwegian, and be aimed at linguists in Denmark and other parts of Scandinavia.

In at least one respect we were quite modern – for at that time, 25 years ago, we would from the very beginning only accept papers sent in electronically on discs. We did not take into consideration to make an electronic journal. I cannot say I regret it, because at that time only printed papers were accepted as scientific contributions.

Our dean – who had to pay for the publication of the first free issue – accepted our idea but did not really believe that it would work: “You will have to write all the contributions yourselves. People do not write very much”. He was mistaken. We planned to have 175 pages in each issue, but over the 10-15 years that followed, we always got more, and normally more than 300 pages.

After a few issues, we got the first papers submitted in German and English. And we accepted them. For a Scandinavian readership, papers in the three main Nordic languages, or English or even German, would be easy to understand.

For an international audience of course, only papers in English – or if necessary in German, French and Spanish – are readable. During the next years, this was the main decision to be made: for whom exactly should the journal be produced?

On the one hand, I still find it important to have a journal where you can write about –and discuss scientific problems in your own language. On the other hand, you cannot expect to get international readers for a journal in which half of the contributions are written in a language they do not understand. The solution could have been to go on with two different journals: 1) one with contributions in Danish, Norwegian and Swedish, and 2) another journal with contributions in English and some other internationally well-known languages. We made the choice for only the second possibility. It makes sense in a time where universities want researchers to write in English (only).

After I have left Hermes as one of the editors, the new editors have decided to make another big change: From a printed to an online journal. I am sorry not to have Hermes in a printed version anymore, but I realize at the same time that an adult scientific journal nowadays has to be quickly accessible all over the world, so that new theories and new empirical results can be disseminated quickly and effectively.

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At the time when HERMES started, Finn Frandsen agreed on the following thesis: “If we can make three issues, the journal will be a success. If more, it will be a big success.” In that sense HERMES has been a big success! In the future I look forward to reading many more new issues; this is by now HERMES no. 50.