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Jennings, Edward M. "EJournal: An Account of the First Two Years." The Public-Access Computer Systems Review 2, no. 1 (1991): 91-110.

1.0 Introduction

As I write these first paragraphs of EJournal's autobiography, it is the morning after the first issue hit the "newsstands." Yesterday, I uploaded the mailing list to the list server from my personal account on SUNY Albany's VAX. Then I finished the unexpected task of deleting 283 copies of the subscription confirmation message that was sent to recipients. Ready at last, I e-mailed the fourth "final" version of the 421-line issue to the list server for network distribution. Then came the catch: I was not privileged to send anything to the list from that account. So, it wasn't until I had gone through one more file transfer and the deletion of a "wrong-address" header that EJournal 1.1 went off into the "matrix."

Yesterday's episode is typical of the last two years: one adjustment of expectations after another. This essay will fill in some of the twists and turns along EJournal's short journey. It will be a kind of editorial autobiography, and I will finish up with a rationalized interpretation of the response to the mid-March 1991 mailing.

Near the top of EJournal's front page is the line: "An Electronic Journal concerned with the implications of electronic networks and texts." My interest in paperless texts goes back to an experimental course in 1985. In it, we almost abandoned the classroom in favor of writing to each other from terminals. My awareness of larger networks began when Frank Madden, of SUNY's Westchester Community College, introduced me to an Exxon-sponsored project out of New York Institute of Technology. Michael Spitzer had convinced several people interested in using computers to help students figure out how to write more confidently. In the spring of 1989, after Michael's funding had dried up and Fred Kemp started MegaByte University (MBU) on BITNET, several intriguing issues began to pop up with some frequency. Let's turn the clock back, then, to Spring 1989.

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2.0 Initial Issues

One set of issues had to do with the academic sociology of networks, lists, and bulletin boards as a medium--the fascination they held for some people, and the nagging we felt as we wasted our time in extended and stimulating, but professionally unproductive conversations. Another set had to do with the

peculiarities of the discourse itself. We all had some inkling, I think, that writing is different when you have to scroll it instead of flip codex pages. It is more like talking when you know the names of almost everyone who will read what you type, but have never met most of the group. I think it was Michael Cohen who likened the environment to a large party where friends, acquaintances, and strangers mingle, and where most of the conversations are familiar enough to be easy to join, yet just strange enough so you don't feel obliged to chime in.

One fine day, as narrators blithely say, I wondered if it would make sense to try distributing some sort of "journal" over the network. MBU had tried putting some texts into its archives. Most of them had been donated by their authors after presentations at meetings. When I downloaded and scanned them, though, they felt longer than I wanted to read. I wanted a place where some of the intriguing ideas that streamed across my screen every week could be packaged so they would be eligible for publication credit within the accounting system of higher education. I wanted something less stodgy than the familiar pseudo-permanence of paper journals, but less quick-triggered than the bright snippets on MBU and less scattered than the stream of observations on HUMANIST. Joe Raben, one of the first people to whom I mentioned the idea, thought it might work. This brings us to the fall of 1989.

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3.0 The First Steps

The ideas sketched above were about all we had in mind when we sent a notice to five BITNET lists in the fall of 1989:

Electronic texts in the humanities are not yet generally considered academic "publications." They are not likely to be taken seriously in the course of deliberations about tenure and promotion. This can be attributed, in part, to a latent, unchallenged premise--a default assumption--that ideas aren't quite real until they have been printed and bound and received in the mail. Another factor may be computer networks' reputation for informality. Perhaps most restraining, though, is awareness of how pushy it would be to put forward "ideas" whose merit remained unacknowledged by one's peers.

But an edited and refereed "paperless" journal, one devoted to electronic texts and the implications of the medium, would stand a good chance of acquiring legitimacy even if (and perhaps because) it appeared principally on-line. What's more, network communications ought to permit speedy exchange of submitted texts; reading, critiquing, revising and distributing ought to happen faster than with paperbound media. We are proposing such a project.

3.1 Assembling the Staff

Several happy accidents happened between the first dream and the drafting of those paragraphs. The proprietors of SUNY Albany's Computing Services Center, who had helped me with my paperless writing experiments over the years, asked good questions about what such a journal might accomplish. I asked Kelly Kreiger, among others, about finding someone who might help me, probably an undergraduate with an interest in both writing and computers, and she put me in touch with Allison Goldberg, who, it turned out, had written an Honors Seminar paper with me the spring before about computers and privacy. Allison thought the project might be fun, and a few extra credits would help her finish her degree program ahead of schedule. I was delighted. Dave Redding, Director of Undergraduate Studies in English, was willing to let her register for an independent study.

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Don Byrd and Steve North thought an all-electronic journal sounded like a good idea. Steve inquired whether I had asked the Council of Editors of Learned Journals if they knew of anything like what we were doing. My question to Evelyn Hinz, then the Council's President, was answered with an invitation to speak informally at their December session in Washington at the Modern Language Association meeting. Nervously working on that talk and on some parallel speculations for Alan Purves' Center for Writing and Literacy at Albany, I began to wonder about broadening the journal's purpose (this happened as we were drafting and distributing the announcement quoted above).

3.2 The Journal's Focus

At first, the journal was supposed to address the ways that computers affect writing. The focus was to be on texts, discourse, language and rhetoric, and the reciprocities of creating and interpreting. I even asked a few people what they would think of the neologisms "Techst" or "Alternatext" as possible titles for the journal. But, the tentative procedures already implied a somewhat broader range of interests. "Our principal subject is what happens when computer networks supplement paper and sound as channels for distributing 'texts'," we had said.

I had begun to wonder if electronic networks were going to have the same effect on culture as writing and printing. Keeping records, creating long fictions, and going to libraries had transformed "oral" cultures, or so it appeared. Would the new medium for capturing and spreading information prove comparable in its effects on "literate" cultures? Perhaps electronic journals would be the appropriate places to analyze and exhort the Third Wave in the way that printed journals served, and would continue to serve, the Second Wave.

3.3 The First Announcement

The first preliminary draft announcement called "Credol.Net" went to a half dozen people, whose BITNET addresses I had handy, on September 20, 1989. By early October, we had received enough curious responses to keep us going. I began drafting journal procedures on the 12th. Allison sent the two-screen announcement to Fred Kemp's MBU, LITERARY, Willard McCarty's HUMANIST, Rob Royar's On-Line Composition Digest, Malcolm Hayward's EDITOR list, and probably to others via links and nodes unfathomable even by network experts. No mailing lists, no brochures, no paper, no printer, and no directly measurable costs were involved. We had responses from 40 or 50 people, including two outspoken skeptics. Most said they'd like to learn more; a few offered to help. So, we sent out those preliminary ideas about procedures.

3.4 Preliminary Journal Policies

Perhaps the most noteworthy procedure, besides our intent to conduct business electronically and keep essays brief, was the three-tier distribution sequence. Abstracts were to go to subscribers frequently, a table of contents of accumulated titles would go to a wider list occasionally, and everyone would download what they wanted from a file server whenever they wanted to. Although we now send the full text of each article to all subscribers, we intend to carry out the plan of having several "tiers" of announcement and access.

Two other paragraphs, about money and ownership, from those proposed procedures deserve to be noted:

We want to avoid charging for the sharing of what we think we have learned about matters we are all investigating. We all support BITNET, and we'll all share the load of reviewing, and I will feel better about being an editor if everyone knows that we're bootstrapping together in a low-overhead operation. It may be necessary to discuss fund raising at some moment in the future, but for now it's all free.

Ownership: we will do nothing about copyright, permissions, first-refusals, or other paraphernalia of intellectual possessiveness. We're operating in the domain of search, not re-search.

3.5 The Review Process

The idea of sharing the load of reviewing was predicated on the

formation of a group that would carry out the anonymous review of submissions. Here's our invitation to become an editor, which was the last part of the proposed procedures sent to the group that responded to the preliminary announcement:

We would like to develop a list of co-editors or an editorial board or an advisory board, or all of the above. If you have ideas about people who might be invited to be on that sort of list (yourselves included), please send names to us. I don't know how we'll make up panels without insulting someone, sooner or later, but we'll try.

Several people replied that they'd be willing to review submissions in their specialties--history, philosophy, whatever--or even in computer and network topics. We had heard from one person in Finland, one in Italy, and two or three in England. There was some question about whether "promulgate" should replace "publish" in our vocabulary, because publishing was associated with printing, mailing, and handling. Cooler heads prevailed.

By the end of December, I was ready to add two footnotes to our procedures: (1) we could not deal with niceties of typography and format, even underlining, at least in the beginning; and (2) contributors would control, and be responsible for, final copy. I really hoped I could avoid proofreading.

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3.6 The Idea Takes Shape

As we began 1990, there were two ways to look at what had happened so far. The idea of an electronic journal had begun to acquire support and even something of an international audience in just a few months. On the other hand, given the efficiencies of the medium we were celebrating so noisily, it seemed to have taken us a ridiculously long time just to find a few people willing to listen seriously to our ideas.

[As I draft this, it is almost 48 hours since Issue 1.1 was sent out. I have not logged in to find out what happened. I may well have done so by the time I resume work on this text; I will try to keep a straight face and not let knowledge of the reaction affect the story of 1990, the intervening year that both flashed by and dragged along in the meantime.]

4.0 Down To Business

The second semester of 1990-91 seems almost empty. I spent a long time writing up a justification for "support for a periodical" from the university. My answers to the university form's set questions turned into essays because I had to explain, in what seemed like a dozen different ways, why those questions were not pertinent to an electronic publication. I was seeking

assurance that the university would underwrite a part-time position, probably for a graduate student who could step into Allison's shoes. So, when I learned that there wouldn't be any real money for the project, even if the committee found us deserving, I thanked Bill Dumbleton, English Department Chair, and Dona Parker, Associate Dean, for the indirect support they said they could help us with, and set that application aside.

We also started talking with Kelly Kreiger Hoffman about using the list server for distributing and archiving the journal. We thrashed our way through some uncertainties about why we would be unlike a printed journal, accumulated a group of consulting editors, signed on several Advisory Board members, and reviewed our first submission. Maybe the semester wasn't as empty as it seemed.

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Arranging the list was almost as foolish as it was forehanded. We locked ourselves into the subtitle "An Electronic Journal for Humanists" in one unexpected instant when a network expert, hands poised over the keyboard, turned suddenly and asked: "Wha'd'ya wanna call it?" But we really thought we might have an issue to distribute before too long, so we wanted to have the mechanisms in place. Then I forgot about the arrangements.

At the end of January I asked John Slatin at the University of Texas, Austin and Stuart Moulthrop at Yale (since gone to UT Austin) if they'd be interested in collaborating on a piece for EJournal about hypertext. I had something of a run-in on one network list with a person who felt strongly that electronic journals could not, would not, and, perhaps, should not work. The major objection was that originality, copyright, and ownership could not be controlled on the network, and that the world would virtually come to an end if they were not controlled.

My sketchy notes show that Stevan Harnad (editor of Psycology) jumped in to defend electronic media, and that Harry Whitaker told me, rather eloquently, to stand my ground. I immediately asked Harry to join the Board of Advisors. He lived in the world of cognitive science and, like Joe Raben, had edited "real" scholarly journals (Brain and Cognition as well as Brain and Language). I hoped that his presence would symbolize our interest in reaching outside the realm of literary theory and he would help us learn to edit responsibly.

4.1 The Board of Advisors

I will outline the process of putting together our Board of Advisors because it illustrates serendipity and one way that e-mail has spoiled me.

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Joe Raben, founding editor of Computers and the Humanities, had said he'd be willing to help out. I wrote Arthur Danto in early February; he had helped me with a project in the seventies, and was probing the blinkspace between art and artifice, between medium and backdrop. In mid-month, I found courage and time to ask Bob Scholes and Dick Lanham if they would lend us their imaginations and reputations. Dick's insistence that the nature of "text" had been irreversibly changed when pixels met ASCII was part of EJournal's heritage, as was Bob's experiment with computers in a poetry course in the mid-seventies.

Dick sent e-mail back at once, agreeing to be on the Board. Arthur scrawled a nice note saying that he felt unqualified because he had never used and probably never would use the technology. Bob answered positively, some time later, by regular mail. I finally remembered, in March, to ask Joe Raben about actually using his name on the masthead. Sigh of relief; he said we could.

I had started out in the fall of 1989 hoping simply to enlist people who would be recognized by professors of English; people whose established reputations would validate EJournal's claim to be as good a place to be published as most other refereed journals in the humanities. By mid-winter, the journal was already respectable, from that point of view, and thanks to Harry Whitaker's willingness was on its way to bringing the networks and electronic texts within their purported scope. By this time, I was also aware of how dependent I had become on electronic mail for getting everything done. Some tasks that should have been done months ago still get postponed because they require paper, envelopes, and postage.

An aside about the name "EJournal." The closest thing to a disagreement with a Board member was my not heeding Joe Raben's advice to assign an academically resplendent title like "Studies in the Relationship . . ." or some such deliberately heavy phrasing. I had wanted a title as far from print-associated locutions as I could get, which meant avoiding "journal," "studies," and "review." But, I realized eventually that journal implied day-by-day-record, which seemed appropriate for adventures in new fields.

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When "Techst" was greeted with the scorn it deserved, I slipped into "e-journal," short for electronic journal, in notes and some conversations. Then, when Joe suggested a weightier name, I realized that I had come to like the abbreviation, which seemed to suit the directness and informality of the network. I was also fully aware that some literary periodicals are known better by their initials than by their formal titles.

4.2 Editorial Procedures

Our actual editorial procedures had not been worked out when the first essay arrived to be considered. We were committed to anonymity and to using e-mail, so I stripped names and affiliations from the essay and sent it to a distribution list made up of people who had answered the call for volunteers. I asked them to think about what they would like EJournal to become. I don't remember specifying any criteria. Within a week I had received plenty of responses. The consensus seemed to be that the essay was interesting and well constructed; however, the subject might be too narrow for our presumed audience. I broke the news to the author.

This process seems to me one of the great strengths of the electronic journal format. Not only can we be fast, but we can look at every submission as a committee of the whole, reading it from the perspectives of different academic disciplines as well as in terms of our own experience in the network labyrinth. The senior editor merely decides what to send out for review, sifts the panel's responses, and communicates consensus to the authors.

This procedure is also something of a happy accident. EJournal has never held a meeting to discuss and decide editorial policy. In retrospect, the idea of settling on a definitive editorial policy looks almost silly, like an exercise in compromise that may have been useful in times when recording was dominated by paper. It implies permanence, the kind of congealed consistency characteristic of print-dominated culture. However, in the matrix, with its heritage of lists and bulletin boards, both the integrity of the journal and its evolving relevance seem best served by the delegation of editorial judgment to independent readers.

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4.3 Highs and Lows

By the end of March 1990, Allison and Kelly had shepherded the journal past several milestones. We had a Board of Advisors, we had a panel of Consulting Editors, we had been through our first review, and we had stuck our toes into the lake of "list servering." I had asked people to write essays about hypertext and about a "hyperversity," a prophesied environment for education in the coming cyberspace era. All of this was encouraging.

Then, however, Kelly confirmed that she would be leaving the university, and I worried about what would happen if I couldn't find people to answer my questions and look after the actual e-mail and network connections. There had been some nasty noise on the line between my 8088 machine at home and the VAX on campus, and I had gotten into a flurry of activity with a campus committee charged with discussing "Educational Technology." Allison had real jobs lined up for the fall. Even if the Vice President's committee was to endorse the idea of the journal, there would be no money available to support any kind of student

assistance. There were some discouraging moments. EJournal sat there waiting for something to happen.

Kelly arranged for Bob Pfeiffer, her successor as electronic Postmaster, to guide us into the maze of list servers and file servers. As she moved into the position of Head Consultant in our computer center, Allison persuaded Ron Bangel to think about following her as Managing Editor (Acting) of the journal. He agreed to consider enrolling for several credits of independent study. The idea of an electronic journal had taken on potential form thanks to Allison and Kelly, and the momentum of their efforts carried us into the fall semester.

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5.0 Year Two Begins

As the first year was Allison Goldberg's, the second year was Ron Bangel's. An English major, he had also run the university's "Open Line" through the Caucus software on the VAX. Besides looking after much of the correspondence that was beginning to trickle in, Ron prodded me into arranging a totally separate account for the journal, one that he and I could share. Once we got there, he found out that I was still confusing two kinds of indexing locators, the file name and the directory the file was stored in. Having been conditioned by DOS to keep the filenames short, I had kept assigning almost indecipherably short names.

Ron designed nests of subdirectories and taught me to use long, thorough, and systematic filenames. He set up a directory-tree display called "Swing" (a program from the files of the local ACM chapter) so we could navigate our multiplying directories and subdirectories pictorially. And he started keeping a log of what we were doing so that the technical details of our procedures wouldn't be forgotten as they became semi-automatic.

Meanwhile, EJournal's mission was expanding. I didn't realize it while the change was taking place--indeed, new implications keep popping up--but a call from Ann Okerson in late summer helped us see that EJournal was one of a few electronic publications that were trying to be "scholarly" or "academic" by virtue of an editorial process more elaborate than the screening of postings to a BITNET list. Ann pointed out that librarians had long been worried about the rising cost of serial publications, and they were wondering if experiments like EJournal might become one route toward holding down escalating costs.

5.1 The Questions Emerge

It had been easy for me to vow that EJournal would be free. Early statements of BITNET policy had frowned on activity that might involve filthy lucre, and I had smiled at the thought that the Net might let us revive motives from seventeenth-century England. As I saw it, Bacon's Solomon's House and the fledgling

Royal Society had assumed that discoveries should be shared and that those who found or made new knowledge were more or less obliged to give it away.

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Even though electronic distribution does indeed involve real costs, it is cheaper than using paper, printers, and postage. More significant, perhaps, is the appearance of freedom in the eyes of the academic practitioner. I had not stopped to think, though, that seventeenth-century scientists set about sharing knowledge before copyright and patent laws controlled the ownership of intellectual property.

In short, money raised its ugly head. Who does own what we make public? Who can get possession of it, and how? How will discipline-sponsored electronic journals "compete" with the codex journals in their fields? In this context, I am just now recognizing some of the ways that EJournal is slightly different from most other electronic publications. We have no tight disciplinary or departmental or program allegiance. We have gone outside the literature-writing realm to scan and report and speculate about a phenomenon that is hostage to no academic specialty.

Ann Okerson's call, then, prompted another round of pondering our still-inchoate purpose, and led to two specific developments: (1) participation in an October 1990 meeting at North Carolina State University of a group she dubbed the Association of Electronic Scholarly Journals, and (2) her acceptance of an invitation to be one of our Advisors.

5.2 Two Articles are Submitted

Back at the keyboard and screen, we accepted our first piece. We used the procedures from the spring before, and got a different range of replies from the panelists. Some said, as I recall, "Sure, this is just what we want, even though it's less formal [read 'pompous'?] than most 'scholarship'." Some said "It seems a little hasty-drafty." And some thought it could be OK with the addition of a couple of acknowledgments of precedents for parts of some of the ideas.

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I tried to articulate for the author a summary of the positive responses, and asked for swift revision so that we could get a first issue out. One of the reviewers was inspired to send in an essay that took off from the original piece. We were excited because we had imagined trying to trigger miniature chain reactions to our essays. This type of interchange would be more stimulating than stale "snail mail" controversies that arrive quarterly.

Both essays are still sitting in their subdirectories. Electronic networks move texts fast once they are ready, but they can't speed the writing and revising process all by themselves.

Ron and I exchanged ideas for a masthead. I needed something to put on paper in order to apply to the Library of Congress for an ISSN, and he made sure that it would meet the needs of screen-scroll technology. We didn't want to pollute the channels and mailboxes with wasteful "black space," and we wanted to let readers proceed through an issue without having to find their way backwards to information that had slipped away.

We were ready to add another layer of consultation. Having checked our efforts at on-screen design with the advisors, then with the panel of consulting editors, we were ready to send an announcement to the list of interested "subscribers" who had signed on since the preliminary mailing of a year before. Our first mass mailing, so to speak, went to that group, and also to managers of several closed lists. We sent it, in a shotgun blast, straight to all members of some open lists as well. The several screens included the cover page, the staff, and the latest version of our evolving statement of purpose.

The first response was a howl about our breach of propriety; we had somehow threatened to clog the circuits of the matrix by using such a long distribution list instead of a BITNET file server. And there was enough overlap among lists, we were lectured, so that some people were getting more than one copy. Our Computing Services Center Director, Ben Chi, told me not to worry. We might have touched the edge of naughty behavior, but shouldn't feel ashamed. He estimated that the announcement might have gotten to some 7,000 mailboxes.

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At this point we felt committed. There was (1) an "accepted" essay awaiting revision, (2) a set of editorial procedures that seemed to have worked, (3) commitments to work on two more essays and a review, and (4) enough responses to the late-fall announcement to build our pre-publication subscriber list all the way to 300. Besides, we had been assigned an ISSN (1054-1055) because we had promised to begin publishing in January.

But plenty could go wrong. I lost one contributor's address and almost refused what became our first article. In our eagerness to be all-electronic, we fouled up our list server's mailing list. These last few anecdotes bring us up to the first issue.

6.0 The First Issue

By spring 1991, the widely broadcast announcement had brought inquiries about proposed essays. Several seemed feasible, some seemed a bit celebratory rather than ruminative, and one struck me as a possibility. I set up a subdirectory for it, removed its

mail header, added a headnote for the panel of consulting editors, and sent it off to the group. The return messages were not enthusiastic. The piece seemed somewhat stale, and it probably would be redundant for most of our readers. I went back to the subdirectory to recapture the author's address. No name. There was an address, but it was cryptic; I had expunged the name more thoroughly than I should have in the course of making the piece anonymous.

There were some anxious hours while I tracked through notes, logs, and who-where techniques to make a match I could be confident would not embarrass the journal. I am determined, after that episode, to be sloppy in the direction of redundant records. And I dread discovering the next inadvertent error. Someone will be mystified, frustrated, or hurt (or all three), and we might not even know that anything happened. I am finding electronic files harder to keep track of than even sloppy paper folders. I hold on to more pieces, it seems, but have more trouble finding them, in spite of Ron's valiant struggle towards orderliness.

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I have reason to remember one particularly crisp note which arrived at the end of December. It proposed yet another electronic journal, this one for the purpose of getting into print research ideas that had not been funded. Or so it appeared. I dashed off a "thanks but no thanks note," explaining that the proposed journal sounded almost like a repository for rejects.

I'm happy to say that my insult was forgiven. The author, Robert Lindsay, took me to task for not reading carefully, but accepted responsibility for having left some implications out of his brief inquiry. The proposal he submitted, when fleshed out and contextualized, became the first issue of the journal. It seemed to strike the editors as the kind of piece we should be offering. It was a sensible way to make use of the novel opportunities opening up on the network.

6.1 Distribution Decisions

While the panelists were pondering the article about "Electronic Journals of Proposed Research," Ron was preparing an efficient mailing list. We couldn't just e-mail to the 300 ID's with a distribution list; that would threaten to clog the network even more than our redundant announcement had done in November. A BITNET list server was the obvious answer [1]. We uncovered the list server niche set up almost a year earlier; all we had to do was learn how to use it.

I had already learned a few tricks from starting up a closed list in the fall, so this venture looked easy. I deciphered enough of the Parisian handbook, with Bob Pfeiffer's help, to customize the

message that subscribers would receive. We made my personal VAX account the "owner," so that the EJOURNAL@ALBNYVMS editorial account wouldn't trip over itself in communicating with EJRN@ALBNYVM1 (the list). Bob told us to ship the mailing list to him when we were ready, and he would install it himself. We sent it over.

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Meanwhile, approving notes were arriving from the editorial panel. We set to preparing the texts to accompany the journal's departments: supplements, letters, and reviews. The idea of supplements has to do with recantations, objections, endorsements, or whatever might deserve to be appended to an essay or article already published in EJournal. The supplement seems like a reasonable compromise between the permanent, frozen text of the printed medium, and the indeterminate, perpetually adjusted "con-text of electronic polylog." (Thanks to MBU and, I think, John Slatin, for that post-dialogic term.) Whether supplements will replace letters of indignation or approbation we can't predict. We imagine that a letters section will permit debate while issues are still warm, but it may be that anything slower than instant e-mail feedback will lag too long to suit the network community.

Mindful of the mailbox-clog problem, we had decided to devote each issue to one substantial essay. Also aware of the importance of easy citation, but fretful about clutter and conscious of the ways that techniques for electronic text-searching have been developing, we decided to announce only the number of lines in each section of the issue. Since an electronic publication needn't wait for, or rush to meet, a quarterly or monthly schedule, I decided to identify each issue with a volume number, based on a calendar year, and an accompanying (serial) issue number, along with the month and year of actual publication. The March 1991 "edition" is Volume 1, Issue 1.

6.2 The First Issue is Published

After the issue layout was prepared, text was copy-edited and checked by the author, subscription information was tested for comprehensibility as well as accuracy, and a dummy issue was sent back and forth to verify arrival appearance, we were ready. It was at this point we learned that we'd sent a bad mailing list to be installed on the list server.

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In order to be all-electronic, we had put only the e-mail address of the recent subscribers into our mailing list, not the users' names. Because the list server requires a "real" name as well, Bob Pfeiffer sent them back to us after he had arduously checked out the validity of every address on our list. Ron made up some

"real names," I inserted some that I remembered. I dropped by Bob's office to say that we were ready to send out EJournal 1.1. He said he was leaving for a month's vacation that afternoon. Flustered, I shipped over the updated list. He squeezed its installation into his countdown schedule, and the first issue was ready to go out that evening.

However, as I mentioned at the beginning, the ownership question tripped me up; I couldn't broadcast to the list from the account where the laid-out issue was sitting. Once again, an assumption about how easy it would be was optimistic. Again, the fix turned out to be easier than we deserved.

7.0 Conclusion

Released in April 1991, EJournal 1.1 seems to have been received reasonably well. We have a small e-mail folder of congratulations. No one has complained. Many more people have subscribed than have asked to be dropped from the list. On the other hand, we haven't been flooded with submissions or other editorial correspondence.

At the beginning of this essay I promised "a rationalized interpretation of the response" to the first issue. There isn't much to interpret, but several matters have come into focus. Essentially, I am increasingly aware of EJournal's precarious position.

First, we have broken from several paper-based conventions, which leaves us without much in the way of a conventional constituency. At the same time, we don't yet know if networkers generally, even those whose home base is in the humanities or social sciences, are interested in a conveyance that is even a tiny bit slower than lists, newsletters, and personal e-mail.

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Second, we are not a version of an existing print-oriented journal. Nor do we represent a professional society or an existing academic field. The number of subscribers, approaching 350, suggests that we may have a constituency, but the paucity of submissions may imply that there are more observers of the journal than participants in its mission. Or there may simply be many more participants in network activities than there are observers of its implications.

Third, there has been an inversion of difficulties. For two years, it looked as if getting started would be hard. Thanks to the support and sympathy of many wonderful people, though, that has turned out to be relatively easy, although not speedy. The hard part is going to be bootstrapping the reciprocal needs of those writers and readers for whom the network itself, the cyberspace matrix, constitutes a "field" to be explored.

Notes

1. To subscribe to EJournal, send the following message to
LISTSERV@ALBANYVM1: SUB EJRNL Subscriber's Name. Submissions
and all editorial correspondence should be addressed to our
"office": EJOURNAL@ALBANYVMS.

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