

In Conversation with: JCMS Editors Past and Present

MAXINE DAVID SPEAKS TO SIMON BULMER AND TONI HAASTRUP

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Facilitator: So, hello, I'm Dr Maxine David and I'm very pleased to have here with me today two editors of JCMS, one former, one current. We start with Professor Simon Bulmer who is at the University of Sheffield. I'm sure he'll be known to everybody, and Dr Haastrup who is at the University of Kent at Canterbury. Thank you both very very much for agreeing to do this.

Toni: Thank you.

Facilitator: So, if we could begin maybe with you, Simon. Just talk to us, maybe share some of your memories of being a JCMS editor. I believe you were an editor with Andrew Scott who was an economist from '91 to '98, is that right?

Simon: '98, that's right, yes.

Facilitator: So, I think especially Toni might be very very glad to hear a little about those early days, and I think it would be very interesting for us to just get some sense of what has changed, evolved, if you like, in the fortunes of JCMS and our discipline.

Simon: Okay, I think a lot has changed. The whole technology of running a journal, the ownership of the journal, the founding editor of the journal. We've had Uwe Kitzinger who was a stakeholder in the journal until midway through our tenure as editors. There was no such thing as Manuscript Central. I remember Drew doing, Andrew Scott, setting up a software system. We were at the early stages of email, we didn't have Skype and all those kinds of things. So, we were meeting a lot, he was in Edinburgh, I was in Manchester, we were meeting a lot, have editorial meetings. Fortunately, we got on and still get on very well. He was my best man actually and I was his.

So, it was quite a social event doing it. When we took over, we took over from Peter Robinson at St. Andrews University. He was an economist of international integration, and the journal had a very Economics orientation including comparative, regional integration, which is rather less on the agenda, if at all, at the present time. Our editorial platform was to balance with politics, and also to bring in the interface with legal studies.

Facilitator: So, the comparative work that was being done then, that was mostly economically-directed, not much to do with Political Science at all?

Simon: Yes, that's right, there was a lot of customs union theory, looking at West Africa, and then later while we were still editors at the North American Free Trade area,

these kinds of things. So, comparative perspectives, which today in the journal, I don't think you'll find much resonance.

Facilitator: I think Toni, you were talking about doing more work on comparative regionalism now, are you?

Toni: Right, I mean I think precisely because the journals have swung the other way, there wasn't that much comparative regionalism then. You don't necessarily find people submitting on comparative regionalism. I know that the editors that we've just taken over from Michelle Cini and Amy Verdun, had this as part of their agenda, right, and they even went on a trip to Asia where they were looking at the regionalisms in Asia. Olivia actually looked at some of the past issues. So, probably in the last three to four years, you will find some articles on comparative regionalism, people working on Latin America for example, but of course, to a large extent, European Union is often the reference point

When we took over in July, they were quite explicit that we did want comparative regionalism back, we did want more interdisciplinarity because we've accepted it has swung the other way.

Facilitator: So, I wonder in terms of that swing, do you think, each of you, that that is more to do with perceptions of the journal so people just stopped submitting on it, or is it actually much much more about events in the world and scholarship following events, getting these peaks and troughs and regionalism is just back on the agenda? How would you explain it?

Simon: I'm not sure I can comment about on whether regionalism is especially back on the agenda, but I mean I think there are probably three or four things that drive the way the journal comes out, how it looks to the outside reader. One is, as you've mentioned, events. There's obviously a bit of event following in European Integration Studies. The second is there are paradigm changes over time in the disciplines.

So, in politics, the government turn constructivism, more narrative approaches and so on. So, you see then Europeanisation, you see those coming through. Sequentially, I think a third factor is the external environment. English journals, referee journals became the norm not only for Brits and Americans, but across the continent.

So, there are far more continental submitters than before. Whereas on the other side, the structure, the Research Excellence Framework or RAE, before that in the UK, meant some tailing off of economists because they have a hierarchy of journals that they have to publish in and the journal wasn't on the list.

Facilitator: Oh interesting, okay.

Simon: So, applied policy, you tend to get from people in management schools or outside the UK system because of that REF constraint. The other thing in a limited way, and perhaps even more limited now is the way that the editors steer the policy of the journal for their tenure and I think probably at the time

we were editing it, for instance, the 30th anniversary of the journal, had a double special issue with some pretty path-breaking articles like Liberal Intergovernmentalism by Moravcsik, the Capability -Expectations Gap by Chris Hill and others, the work by Joe Weiler for instance on the law of politics interface. Were able to steer it in a way that I'm sure whether that still exists, but Toni will perhaps correct me.

Simon: I mean I would say to a large extent, that exists. Of course, you're absolutely right, there's been a change in the system, right. We don't necessarily commission special issues. We have a lot of submissions, but in terms of the submissions we have, they are quite diverse from the different, you can say, disciplines within which JCMS is ranked. So, we do get submissions from Law, from Economics, from Political Science and from International Relations. I think JCMS tries to retain a generalist audience.

So, on the one hand, yes we do want these different disciplines and increasingly, we are actually encouraging interdisciplinarity. So, perhaps now, we don't get as many Economics articles that have lots of econometric models because we do want people reading JCMS, a sociologist to get something from an Economics article.

To an extent, I think we are, in that sense, shaping the journal because we are saying to economists that you have to learn to communicate to others, not just through numbers and symbols.

Facilitator: What are those conversations like and I mean it would be interesting as well, Simon, to hear from you because you had an economist and then you had a political scientist, how did you bring those, but perhaps you first, Toni, about how difficult are those conversations to have especially with various type of scholars who rightly think they know their stuff and their audience?

Toni: I mean I think the way that we've approached this so far, bearing in mind that we've only recently taken over this, often people are submitting research that they consider to be quite good because they do know what the standing of the journal is, and often they are writing on topical issues but that would be sustainable.

So, if we as editors, if we think that it's a good thing, this is something that we communicate unofficially to colleagues about the changes that they would need to make in order for us to pass this to reviewers, right. Obviously because we're looking for a diversity of reviewers because again, we are trying to foster this interdisciplinarity. They do tend to take our advice in that sense if we really think that this is something that the journal should want to take forward.

Simon: I think from the perspective of 1991, it might be interesting to note that we had written an editorial about how we wanted to take the journal, including a balance between Economics and Politics, and didn't have a politics manuscript to publish until one came in and saved the day from Mike Shackleton as I recall. Otherwise the statement would have looked a bit empty frankly. I think also the interdisciplinarity, I mean that was a multidisciplinary issue.

Interdisciplinarity, as an example, I would give one that we had on Law and Politics, which was something that we pushed because of our editorial policy. I

think this pushing special issues in a particular way and trying to corral people, facilitated them with editorial budgets. I don't know how it is now. We were able to do that once or twice, and perhaps that also might allow me to say something about the annual review.

Facilitator: Yes, I mean we're obviously all familiar with the annual review, but I have no idea how that came about and why it came about really.

Simon: Well, that came out during one of these editorial meetings that happened to take place in Glossop between Andrew Scott and myself, that we recognised that there were similar exercises in German. There was a Jahrbuch Europäische Integration. Much bigger. There were yearbooks of that kind of thing but there was no record of what had happened.

We thought that that was a gap and that was something to pursue with the journal to be part of the package, but outsourcing the editor of the annual review is always different from the editor of the journal because it's a different kind of commissioned article basis, but that developed and trying to develop different disciplines as part of getting that record for the year.

Facilitator: So, I mean you had quite a long editorship. So, when did the annual review start and how quickly did it start to evolve?

Simon: Yes, I'm not sure exactly when that would be. I think around about '93, '94. We had a bit of a spurt there. I suppose the first year, you're trying to find your feet and there's stuff following through that's already in the pipeline from the previous editors, and it was around '92, '93 that we tried to make our impact. One way was through this 30th anniversary special edition and conference at the [Ford Foundation] and UACES supported.

Then the annual review, I think, followed on from that. So, we had then more or less set our direction and things could go a little bit more on the regular flow after that, but I'm going to have to look now online to see when it did actually appear. It's always slightly complicated because you're doing a review of the previous year. So, sometimes those two things lead to a little bit of confusion.

Facilitator: But it's interesting because I mean, you're both talking about changes. You've got quite a long gap between your different editorships, but there's an awful lot of continuity there as well. I mean obviously, I know, Toni, you've kept the annual review on, you've appointed new editors. Why do you think it's still an important thing to do?

Toni: I think, I mean to a large extent, we see the role of JCMS as being the bridge between academia and the research that is done in academia, and non-academics, whether that's policy officials or just those who are interested in European politics, the European Union or how Europe interacts with the rest of the world. In that sense, the annual review does still serve a special function because it is reporting what's happened in Europe over the year, but it's also able to highlight things that may not appear in the news but it's essential to policy making, about at the same time showcases the type of new research that is coming out in a very specific area.

So, we do think that it's quite important to keep the annual review as that bridge. We understand for example, policy officials who use it in the commission, that it is useful to know what academics are thinking and how they're communicating, what the European Union does, but also challenges their own practices as well. They don't actually get that in echo chamber as is often the case for most of us. So, we do think it's a very nice complement, it serves a different function as Simon has said, but it's a very nice complement to the main journal.

Facilitator: And let's hope that in the current context, they are reading it. I somehow doubt it but there we go. Shall we move onto, oh one thing actually. You, particularly Simon, have really talked essentially, I think, about agenda-setting powers, that you really had the power in that time to set the agenda and decide on where things needed to go, and I'm sure that that was the product of a lot of conversation about what was the types of things that you were talking about in terms of external events. Do you feel that you have got agenda-setting power, Toni? Or you have a publisher obviously behind you now, and then there are things like the REF and all of these different structures. So, do you think that that constraints you a lot more as editors?

Toni: Yes and no. To a certain extent, we are constrained actually by the sheer volume of what we are getting that is actually good work, right. So, one can set the agenda when you really believe that certain things are not being given the space that they should really be accorded, but we are getting a substantive volume of submissions. To an extent, as an editor, you don't want to play gatekeeper to what should be coming in and what shouldn't be coming in, especially if again, that work is good and it is relevant, but of course you still want to maintain quality.

Where we do, I would say, editors have a bit of power or influence in shaping is with regards to the special issue submissions. So, while it's not often the case that now, we commission anything because there are so many people really to put together special issues on their own. We can determine that we've had something on monetary policy in the last 10 years. maybe that's not the direction that we really want to go, right.

Have we really paid attention to what Economics is saying about Europe, European Union or European Union's international relations lately, where people really want to focus on that particular thing? In my experience so far, and I've only been through one round of it, the submissions for special issues are of extremely high quality, which is almost counter-intuitive to what one might hear about what special issues are.

People often prefer to submit their article independently. Extremely high quality, and we've decided as an editorial team that we will, if it's in our power, try to give space to those voices that are not often heard, whether in disciplinary terms or in methodological or theoretical.

Facilitator: So, that makes me think of three things. First of all, about competition, so how much competition did you have with other journals at the time. You were definitely working in a very very crowded environment. The volume of submissions is very very high for JCMS. So, I'm just wondering what that was

like and your stewardship. Then the third question, maybe a tricky one given this professionalisation agenda that we've got, and you were talking about gatekeeping, Toni, but I wonder as well about whether we have been constrained too much by a fear of accusations of cronyism, such that we don't commission pieces in the way that you did for quite different reasons.

But is that problematic in terms of the fact that there are things that need to be said about certain issues, and they're not being said. The only way that they've been published is if somebody is actually saying okay, we would really like you to write on this because we think it's really important and relevant, and I wonder if we've lost the space for that. So, perhaps I can go to you first, Simon?

Simon:

Yes, I mean those are three really interesting points. We were conscious about competition at the time when we were trying to take the journal forward because Jeremy Richardson was just launching the Journal of European Public Policy and we had come off a period with our previous editor where it'd been Economics-focused and if we were going to have balanced disciplines, we had to be careful that the politics wasn't going on in the direction of JEPP. So, we were conscious about competition and that's one of the reasons why we were proactive in commissioning. Of course, those kind of ethical considerations at that time were not so stringent as they perhaps are now.

So, we were able to take some shortcuts which we thought were in the interest of the viability of the journal and of scholarship in general. It might be regarded differently, Toni will have something to say, I'm sure. I'm pretty sure I can't recall, from 20 years ago, the volume of submissions. They went up progressively during the course of our tenure as editors, but I mean two things. The European Studies community has grown significantly over the period and secondly, the amount of contributions from non-English language first speakers, if I can put it like that, particularly from the European continent, has increased as peer reviewed articles became the norm there as well. Whereas when we started off, that was still in its infancy. So, yes.

Toni:

Well, I mean I think where we've not had any need to commission yet, and then I say this two months into the job, of course. We've not had any need to commission linked to the volume, right. So, JCMS, according to our last count gets just under 300 submissions per annum, sometimes it goes a bit over that, and for a variety, as I said, of disciplines. So, we've not, at least at this point, there's not been any need to commission. Now of course in the context of those volumes that we're getting, precisely because of the competition, there might be a sense that perhaps JCMS doesn't publish certain themes and that other journals, competitive journals, are perhaps more open to certain ideas. We think, at least the editorial, the new editorial team thinks that there is certainly something that we have to confront head-on, but this is where, as Simon said, we have to look at the volume of the scholars themselves, and this is where professional associations come in.

For the most part, precisely because JCMS is part-owned by UACES, our view of who the scholars are often are far more than the UACES community or UACES-type community. Increasingly, the UACES-type community is very much Political Science, International Relations. To an extent, some Law, we're getting sociologists now. We want to change this and that might actually mean, as

editors, engaging with professional associations that might not actually be or might not have been on our radar, right. It is about stepping outside of our comfort zone.

It might be about going to other regions, going to Latin Americans saying, who are the people studying regionalisms in Latin America, who are the scholars who've done comparative work about Europe and European politics in Latin America. There might be anthropology for example, right, and related to the previous question around agenda setting, I think given the competition, the structural constraints relating to the relationship between the journal editors, professional associations and the publisher, this might be the way to set an agenda.

We do hope that at least in the five years that we've been contracted for, this would be our approach because we do think that the previous editors, Simon included, have done a fantastic job in terms of establishing JCMS within United Kingdom and to a large extent, continental Europe, but there's very much an Anglosphere bias, if you want to put it that way, even with the European context.

Facilitator: Yes, so that makes me think about two things. One, we've obviously got UACES at 50 and unfortunately, in the year, we're still trying to see our way out of the European Union and I'm sure that you two probably join me in hoping that we never see a way out of the European Union. That's a different matter, but you've mentioned Anglosphere, you've mentioned language and as a publishing panel, we had a very very interesting question posed to us about how book and journal editors felt about re-publishing work that was originally published in another language or otherwise, it is allowing the author to re-publish the work in their country.

I'm wondering what you think from your experiences as academics and editors, but in the context of Brexit particularly, are we going to have to respond to that much more? And do we see a time when actually, English as the publishing language, if you like? I think for our discipline, it's fair to say that that might shift.

Simon: Well, I am not convinced about that in the near-term. I think the quality of the English language journals on the European Union is quite different from those in German or French, if I think of those journals. So, I think that's likely to continue for a while and in so far as maybe continental academics are going to teach in English to perhaps attract some of our students or our overseas students. They're going to write in English, so we maybe on the margins as a [non-member], but I'm not sure we will be as an English language.

After all, a lot of the publishing of European Union studies is by publishers based in Britain. I'm talking about book publishers here rather than journal publishers, but that to a certain degree. So, I think that's going to continue, to be honest.

Toni: I mean I would say, I don't think, even not in the medium-term, I don't think that publication in English is going to stop in any way, shape or form. However, I think at least from our conversations with the publisher, there is a desire to keep growing the market, to put it in crass terms, and they are devising new

ways of how to grow the market. Some of that includes, for example, translating abstracts into other languages, right.

So, our publisher, for example, has some of the catalogue abstracts translated into Mandarin, into Spanish for example, and I think perhaps in the long-term, I can't promise then we would be doing our tenure at all because there's already so much to do. Something like the Journal of Common Market Studies, I don't think it would be amiss to have some abstracts, maybe not for every article, but for relevant articles in Portuguese, in Spanish, in Chinese.

Facilitator: Polish.

Toni: Polish, just thinking. The world is facing a demographic change and I think again, we do think in very European Studies too. What JCMS is, EU studies doesn't necessarily have a disciplinary ranking. So, JCMS for example, is ranked in International Relations, in Political Science, in Economics, which means we are also speaking to the broader disciplinary trends and broader disciplinary changes.

Then I think it can only be advantageous if we can reach more people, but I certainly have no desire for English to stop being the lingua franca because I'm biased that way, it's my language, but I think there are other ways of talking to others around the world.

Simon: I mean the point you made about translating articles, as a JCMS editor in the past, that would be something I'd be taking on with Blackwell's because everybody assigns their copyright and then it's in Blackwell's hands. So, you've almost got to have that conversation about how far that's possible with them on an ad-hoc basis or on a systematic basis. That's not really in the hands of the journal editors actually, but it's worth investigating.

Toni: Yes, I mean I just think that there is something about learning. Ultimately, we're academics because we want this exchange of knowledge and wisdom, and I wonder sometimes as well whether it's wholly ethical to really hold fast to a line where English is the language of publishing. When actually, that then means even the most fluent of speakers, they are much more fluent obviously in their native language, but also if part of what we're supposed to be doing is to reach out to wider society, then we can't assume that everybody is going to have the same level of language acquisition. So, that question was posed to us and it has had me thinking since then. So, I think it's maybe that we need to think a little bit, but I think you're probably right. This is much for the publishers, yes.

Simon: I mean those newer to the profession, if I can put it like that, I mean there was a journal that was bilingual, French and English. It's now the journal of European Integration which came out of Canada, and where the French language aspect fell by the wayside. I don't know whether that was part of its transition to a new publisher, quite how that happened.

Interviewer: Interesting question.

Simon: The direction of travel is the other way, I think, in some respects.

Facilitator: If we could just move on a little bit to social media. We have talked about the fact that you are spanning quite a long time between you as JCMS editors. I know that you blog Simon, but I don't think you're on Twitter or anything like that. I know that you're on Twitter. Why do you blog? Why are you on Twitter and how important do you think either or both of these are for scholars today?

Simon: I think the reason I blog is to try and give short and pithy interventions for a different kind of audience, than the one demanding the full 8,000 word rigor on particular issues and in the hope that it gets picked up amongst the wider audience, not just of academics but also of policy makers and I think that is going with the flow of academia impacts these kinds of things. That I do restrict myself to blogging. I have not got involved in Twitter as yet.

Toni: Simon, I think blogging can create a very nice interface between academic resort but also intervention into societal issues. So, beyond the abstract, yes, indeed. Anyone can read a 200-word abstract, but in terms of translating quite specific academic research to a policy intervention, blogging helps with that and is something that I think is very much accepted by the academic community these days.

From a more instrumental perspective, things like blogging and indeed the use of Facebook or Twitter to promote journal articles has been shown to increase the citation rates of journal articles. This is not anecdotal. We have chatted over the last three, five years on some of JCMS; the articles have done quite well, have been impacted by the authors having blogged and linked back to the article. Mainly because we have a proliferation of knowledge now, but we don't have enough time. But if you're reading an academics blog, you can then decide well, actually, this might be relevant to my research. I will click on the link that goes directly to that article and read the full article.

When we made the bid for JCMS, we are very clear that we would like to have a blog that linked authors articles to how they communicate to the general public, but also some of their own colleagues. Now, of course, we are not going to force anybody to blog if they don't want to. I think a lot of people still find it odd, is a polite way of putting it but we do intend to give people that opportunity and so many people are already doing it, that we think that it would definitely be a good idea. Clearly, with Twitter, the JCMS account sort of tweets new issues, we tweet out articles that we think might be relevant to something that is going on contemporarily.

We found it useful and hopefully we get more Twitter followers so that we can spread the word even more, but by being on Twitter, as well as my other editors, were able to gauge what kind of new research is being done. We can tell people well, we think that this interesting, have you thought perhaps submitting to JCMS? It will still have to go through the review process and it is not the direct, straight commissioning, but I think by being Twitter, you do have a lot more access to a lot more people.

Simon: That is a slightly different point on blogging. Another point about blogging is you can get comment out of there quickly. The lead time of getting into production. Something like Brexit of course, you want to have it quick, people are hungry to hear views and it is still early days for things coming in journals, so

it may be the first ideas that then go onto a journal article whereas you are talking about ...

Toni: When it has already been done.

Simon: Yes, exactly.

Toni: I think it is both, really, because I think in the end ... one of the things I also like about blogging, which can be daunting is this open source peer review here, especially with the kind that you are talking about. I have also written on Brexit and in a way, you're communicating with people who may or may not agree with you and they are putting out comments there and you're having to engage with them, but for me, it has actually been quite good because it has forced me to think so when I do translate that into the more academic piece; I have already engaged with different types of people than I would have otherwise engaged with.

I think you're absolutely right. On a topic like Brexit, it is almost denying any sort of methodological or theoretical... I guess it still retains its originality in that sense. I found that in the last 18 months, the best way to get out things is through academically linked blogs, but I think also you can start that way but also refer.

Facilitator: It's a circular process in some sense.

Toni: We have seen a lot of academics doing that actually, and it's always the positive, not that it doesn't have a negative, because it is again quite time consuming. It can be quite instrumental, the positive has always been sort of much high visibility for the work that colleagues are doing and I think for that, it is quite worth it.

Facilitator: UACES 50, I think that it is only right we should end by me asking you the easiest question which is are you positive? Are you negative about the future of European studies in the context of everything that is going on or are you thinking that in 50 years' time, someone will be celebrating UACES at 100?

Simon: Interesting question. I am reasonably confident that UACES will be continuing onto the long term. I don't know about 100. That is contingent on things beyond Brexit. There is a whole literature on disintegration; if that gained any traction, then of course we would be in a different place. Brexit is a little bit more limited.

Of course, for most of us in UACES, it is a matter of deep concern. I went to Loughborough in 1972, before we joined the EU to read European studies and I will be reaching normal retirement age in 2019. This is probably my academic career in a way, so of course, I regard that for a particular personal standpoint that you can imagine. But I think UACES and the study of European Unions is more durable, even than me.

Toni: I think the same way. I can't really say 100 years precisely because of what Simon has said. There are so many other things going on, to not be too pessimistic, there are issues around possibilities of a nuclear war that even us European studies experts.

Facilitator: Not to be too pessimistic.

Toni: We do have to consider it, but I think my view though is given the constitution of an institution like UACES, European union studies and Europe Union itself, what UACES is in the long term might be different from what it is now. I hope for the better, but it is not necessarily something we can tell, but I do think that UACES will last longer than Brexit even if Brexit happens and that UACES might actually be invigorated by Brexit contrary to what people might fear right now.

We, who are members of UACES, who are in the scholarly communities publishing in JCMS but also in other journals must be willing to put in the work to ensure that UACES has this longevity that we hope for.

Facilitator: It's good to hear that something is in our hands.

Simon: I first came to UACES conference in 1976 and I think the two things that count for its longevity one is at that stage, it was a very much an invitation only conference. It was in January. So, now it is much more participatory and second, it was very much a UK conference and now it is much more a European-wide membership and both those features I think are good for the vibrancy of UACES in the longer term.

Whereas if we had been in the model from 1976, that kind of period I think we would be facing much greater challenges with Brexit.

Facilitator: So, real credit to the various executive directors we have had over the years, as well as the European studies academic community. Thank you both so much for giving up your time. This has been really really fascinating, I am sure a lot of people will be calling upon for more memories. Thank you.

Simon: Yes, it was great.