EDITORIAL

Climate change and open access

Sarah Cummings

This issue of the journal focuses on knowledge management in the context of climate change and international development. It presents eight contributions from the Knowledge Management for Development (KM4Dev) community (www.km4dev.org) that highlight methods, practice and experience of climate change and international development knowledge management in sectors including natural resources management, food security, agriculture, community planning, organisational development and adaptation. In particular, on behalf of the full editorial team of the journal, I would like to thank Pete Cranston and Carl Jackson for their work as Guest Editors, all the authors for their contributions, and the reviewers for their important role of peer review.

Generally, such an editorial as this is written by the whole team of editors but, in this case, I am writing this editorial alone because I am taking the opportunity to respond to Peter Ballantyne's recent blog post *Knowledge management and climate change: The KM4D Journal reborn open access[1]* which I encourage you to read. Peter was one of the founders of this journal in 2005 – a small group including Julie Ferguson, Lucie Lamoureux, Chris Addison, Hugo Besemer, Allison Hewlitt, and Katherine Morrow, most of whom are still associated with the journal in one way or other – and is a leading figure in the field of information and knowledge for development and has been for many years. In his blog post, he welcomes the return of the journal to the Open Journal System (OJS) after four years of having been published by Taylor & Francis. In response to Peter's blog post, I would like to explain why the editorial team at the time decided, and as Editor-in-Chief I played an important role in this decision, to move from the OJS system to a commercial publisher and then return to the original model.

It seems, with hindsight almost inconceivable, that the team responsible for the journal would decide for an option that did not guarantee open access, certainly at a time when development itself was moving in that direction as is explained in Peter's blog post. However, at that time, we were struggling with a number of issues which I explained in a mail[2] to KM4Dev on 7 January 2009:

> *For some time, the Editors of the journal have been negotiating with Routledge* [now called Taylor & Francis] *as a potential publisher of the journal. Why have we taken this step? Firstly, we feel that a journal published by a reputable publisher will contribute to the profile of the developing field of knowledge management for development. We think that the e-journal has contributed to this process but that a more formal journal will make an even greater step in this direction. Secondly, a formal printed journal - published and marketed by one of the most renowned journal publishers - will mean that we can channel our efforts into the editorial process.*

> *Support by the publisher will make a huge difference to our work. Thirdly, it was not possible to continue with the current model which depended too heavily on the voluntary efforts of the editors. Although this will still be the case, there is now the prospect that in a few years this may change if the journal becomes a commercial success.*

In fact, at that time, the journal was suffering from a number of challenges, most notably was the lack of sustainability because of the reliance on voluntary contributions, and in particular, the editorial team at that time – Julie, Lucie and I – were cracking under the strain of editing the journal as a voluntary activity. Just to give one example, getting the papers properly edited and uploaded onto the online platform meant working the whole night through. As a consequence, although we started with 3 issues a year in 2005, by 2007 we were down to two and in 2008, only one issue was published.

Publication by a commercial publisher offered us a way out as I explained above with substantial support in the publication process for activities for which we were struggling to find the time: editing, producing the printed copy, maintaining the website and marketing. We were optimistic that if the journal was a commercial success, the first step would be to ensure full open access again. In our agreement with Taylor & Francis, we did do our best to reach a compromise which would allow them to market the journal which would hopefully support the journal's sustainability, and provide optimum access for the KM4Dev community. In the mail to the community, I explained about the free subscriptions which were designed to keep widespread access:

> *First of all, we will be supplied with 300+ subscriptions of the journal free of charge for the KM4Dev community. Routledge will be distributing these copies on our behalf and we feel that this will compensate - to some extent - for the fact that the journal will no longer be fully open access. In addition to this, once the articles are a year old, we will again be able to post them as pre-publication versions on either the KM4Dev website or on a development repository. The existing e-journal platform will remain accessible for the back issues pre-2009 although it will no longer be updated.*

However, although the members of the community did receive the free subscriptions, it was difficult to upload the author copies onto the KM4Dev website, partly because this again called for more time that took us away from the core editorial process and also because we experienced difficulties obtaining the archived author copies from Taylor & Francis once the final versions were published.

The experiment for a sustainable, commercially published journal with open access failed for a number of reasons. First, the journal did not receive enough subscriptions to replace seed funding from organisations which were kind enough to support it in this endeavour: Hivos, the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the European Centre for Development Policy Research (ECDPM) in kind, and IKM Emergent. Part of the problem was that the organisations who were probable subscribers mostly already received a free subscription via KM4Dev, despite the fact that the free subscriptions were actually only meant to be for personal use. Second, it became increasing irksome to the members of the *KM4D Journal* editorial team – and the Guest Editors who had been involved in different

issues – that access to the journal was not open access. This was a problem for members of KM4Dev, other readers but also for authors.

The decision to go back to the OJS and the open access model has been greeted by relief by many members of the editorial team and others, such as Peter Ballantyne. We are convinced that this time it will be possible to make the journal more sustainable: the editorial team is broader that it was in 2008 with more members and a greater amount of commitment (Ewen le Borgne, Ivan Kulis, Lucie Lamoureux, Jean Mêge and Denise Senmartin) and four future issues up to September 2014 are already in the pipeline. This includes a Spanish/Portuguese language issue planned for next year which is hoping to emulate the success of the Francophone issue of a few years ago. Indeed, to mark the journal's multilingual efforts, it is now available in three language interfaces:
English http://journal.km4dev.org/en
French http://journal.km4dev.org/es
Spanish http://journal.km4dev.org/fr
In a very small way, this recognizes the importance of language to both development and to knowledge sharing.

The KM4Dev community is supposedly the only knowledge management/intellectual capital (KM/IC) community of practice in any field to have its own journal. In a recent ranking of KM/IC journals (Serenko and Bontis, 2013) which I have recently placed on the journal's group page on KM4Dev's Ning[3], the journal was graded 14th of all KM/IC journals in 2012, compared to 17th in 2005. Although this is nice recognition of the journal, and implies that in 25 years our journal can be in the top three, I think all of us involved with the journal in some way – editors and guest editors, editorial board members, reviewers, authors – are more concerned with making a contribution to development that to the field of KM as such.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish Jean Mêge a very warm welcome to the Editorial Team as a Senior Editor. Jean was previously the lead Guest Editor of the Francophone issue. Jean, we are delighted to have you with us.

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Reference
Serenko, A., and Bontis, N. (2013). Global ranking of knowledge management and intellectual capital academic journals: 2013 update. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 17(2), in-press.

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[1] http://infoilri.wordpress.com/2013/08/12/km4d-journal/ (Accessed 14 August 2013)

[2] http://dgroups.org/groups/km4dev-l/discussions/ddxbmyw1

[3] http://www.km4dev.org/group/km4djournal/forum/topics/global-ranking-of-knowledge-management-and-intellectual-capital