

The Founding of the *System Dynamics Review*

It was late at night (well, early in the morning) at the 1984 System Dynamics Conference in Oslo at a particularly convivial and well-lubricated gathering of participants, that David Andersen, in his role as the 1985 President of the newly formed System Dynamics Society, asked me to serve as the Society's first Vice President for Publications, with the charge of bringing into being the journal of the Society. Given the hour and heady spirits of the evening, I said I'd be happy to do it.

Under the broad direction of the Society's Publication Committee, consisting of Jay Forrester, Eric Wolstenholme, David Andersen, Richard Day, and I, plans for the as yet unnamed journal began shortly after the Conference. We wanted to bring out two issues in 1985, the first year of the Society, so we worked in several directions at once – creating the editorial structure and procedures for the new journal, deciding on a publisher, and getting content ready for volume I.

With a small group of student supporters in the MIT System Dynamics Group (Becky Waring and Janet Gould), I sought out publishers. We began with an appropriately long list, and rather quickly winnowed it down to three, MIT Press, and the U.S. offices of Elsevier and John Wiley. I argued for naming the journal the "System Dynamics Review," so that we could use the subtitle "the Journal of the System Dynamics Society." Not all liked the title, and Wiley in New York in fact objected to it on the grounds that "journals with the word 'Review' in their titles aren't very well respected." We persevered nonetheless. By May 1985 we had reached the stage of comparing draft contract agreements with these publishers, when, to my consternation, all three dropped out.

In a stroke of great good fortune, the editor at MIT Press put us in touch with Laura Fillmore and her then little company called Editorial Inc. Laura saved the day. She linked me with a designer, Larry Brown, and a copy editor, Alice Cheyer, and worked with me to find a printer. We began the process of publishing the Review ourselves, as a wholly owned operation of the System Dynamics Society.

I showed Larry Brown four journals, each with design features I liked and hated. He rather quickly produced the page layout the Journal employed until recently, with narrow marginal columns in which to put figure captions, abstracts, and the like, and to give the journal a spacious look as well as to serve as extra space for large figures. (Sadly (to me) the original design finally gave way to the more compact constraints of electronic publishing.) I learned a lot about fonts (it was originally Franklin 10.5) and leading (there's more in the text than in the marginal notes); both font and leading were picked to make our technical text feel accessible and friendly.

The cover was an issue. I wanted the table of contents to appear on the outside; others did not. But others also did not want to make me any more distressed than I was about fulfilling my responsibility and getting the journal out, I guess, so we went ahead with the cover as we now know it. For the color of the cover, I asked for opinions. Jay gave us

the answer. “I don’t really care what color it is,” he said, “as long as it looks like the paint on a Mercedes.” So Larry and I picked a very elegant, tasteful, formal-looking fender grey. I considered changing the color every year, but that would have been too flamboyant, so “Mercedes Grey” it has remained.

The tasks of establishing the editorial structure and the contents of the first issue were made every so much easier by Eric Wolstenholme, who did (at least) two great things for the new journal. First, Eric accepted the nomination to be the *Review’s* first Executive Editor, a post he went on to serve in for six years. Second, he agreed to support the new Society and its new journal by ending the publication of *Dynamica* and turning over its entire paper backlog to the System Dynamics Review. *Dynamica* had been founded by Geoff Coyle at Bradford University in 1975 and had served continuously since then as the sole journal devoted to publishing system dynamics scholarship. With Eric as Executive Editor, the backlog of articles from *Dynamica*, and some invited articles for the first issue, we were ready.

The initial invited editorial board consisted of Eric as Executive Editor, Jim Lyneis and Eric Mosekilde as managing editors for main articles, Bernard Paulré as editor for Letters, Notes, and Insights, John Richardson as editor for Announcements and Reviews, John Sterman as editor of the Archives section, and me, continuing the little department I had initiated in *Dynamica* called Research Problems. The rest of the editorial structure were individuals with subject-matter responsibilities: Roger Hall in Business policy and applications; Roger Naill in Public policy and applications; Donella Meadows in Environmental policy and applications; Alan Gaynor in Social science; Pierre Couvreur in Nonlinear dynamics; Geoff Coyle in Defense applications; Andy Ford in Validation; Alan Graham in Technical methodology; John Seeger in Philosophical issues; Karl Clauset in Education; Dennis Meadows in Simulation games; and three regional editors, Pretap Mohapatra (India), Qifan Wang (China), and Khalid Saeed (Southeast Asia). Almost all of these agreed to serve and proceeded to do so for years.

Of course, trying to do this all ourselves, even with the wonderful help of Editorial Inc, meant that we had missed the summer issue. We focused on a double issue for the end of the year. Eric focused on getting the content together; I focused on getting it printed and mailed, since the printer we had selected was Lane Press in Albany, NY. We managed to get the first publication of the *Review*, Volume I, issues 1 & 2, printed and mailed to something like 587 system dynamicists around the world by December of 1985.

The arrangement with Editorial Inc, particularly Laura Fillmore and Alice Cheyer, continued for seven years. Eric handled the content of each issue and the review processes, and I handled getting each one produced and mailed. It was a somewhat unusual editorial arrangement, for I was the one who worked with Alice as she copy-edited everything that would go into the Review. Alice was amazing. (There are many Alice stories, but perhaps the best is the time she found in a complicated model diagram an arrow with the arrow head on the wrong end. To this day I have no idea how she did that.) We worked together on every article for seven years, often on every sentence in each article, and that entire time we never met.

As the *Review* became more famous, we came to the attention of Diane Taylor, editor for management science at John Wiley and Sons in Chichester, who wanted to publish the *Review*. After more than a year of negotiations, involving most of the early founders of the Society and the then current Policy Council, the Society agreed to an arrangement in which Wiley in the UK would publish the *Review* and keep our membership list, with revenues moving back and forth between the Society and Wiley as we then thought appropriate. The initial agreement allowed us to stay at two issues a year until the backlog of papers could support producing more issues per year at a high quality. That happened within two years of moving to Wiley.

Since that time, the *Review* has grown in stature, as the Society has grown in numbers.