

Editorial: finance, access and impact

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To establish the journal, the first publisher, Longview, was awarded a development grant from the Nuffield Foundation sufficient to meet infrastructure and running costs for its first three years. When the development grant ended in March 2011 continuation depended on moving responsibility for publication and accompanying costs to the newly established *Society for Longitudinal and Life Course studies* www.slls.org.uk

The Society's main source of income and assets is membership fees and as membership grows, the costs of such activities as the Journal – currently £14,000 for three issues per annum – are increasingly likely to be met. The journal's Business Plan suggested that three years at least were needed for membership to reach such a 'steady state'. In the meantime an appeal to research centres affiliated to the society to join with SLLS in co-sponsoring the journal generated grants of £10-15,000, scheduled to taper down to zero by the end of the period. The Department of Psychiatry, Free University (VU), Amsterdam, led by Jan Smit and the Institute for Social and Economic research at the University of Essex led by Heather Laurie took up the offer.

We are most grateful to our co-sponsors for the support they have been giving the journal, which has been vital to sustaining it during the post-development phase. But because the Society has built more slowly towards self-sufficiency than the business plan optimistically predicted, there has been, and will continue to be for some time, a funding gap to make up. Acting on the advice of the journal's Editorial Committee, the Society's solution is to introduce the very modest charge for all readers, other than Editorial Board and Society members, of £20 per annum (US dollar and Euro equivalents) for registration to read the journal, starting in December 2012. If you are an author or reviewer for the journal you will of course continue to have free access to the paper(s) for which you are responsible and there are no publication charges. All papers will become fully accessible 12 months after publication.

The other route to free access is joining the Society itself – currently £65 per annum, and £25 or equivalent for doctoral students. Apart from access to current and past issues SLLS membership brings many additional benefits. These include a much reduced registration rate for the Society's annual conference –

this year in Paris, next year in Amsterdam, a bimonthly newsletter containing articles and updates on the progress of the Society and the journal, notice of conferences and training activities and opportunities for networking and communications locally and internationally in between conferences through the Society's 13 chapters led by 'Global Representatives' in different world regions. 'Corporate membership' by organisations and societies is also an option offering the opportunity for reduced fees for five nominated individuals within the organisation and other collective benefits.

Another matter raised in the May 2012 issue, which will be a major topic at this year's SLLS annual conference 29-31 October, is that of impact ratings for the journal. The view is growing in some quarters that the virtual monopoly in this area of academic evaluation by one commercial company, Thomson Reuters, is not the ideal model that we should be signing up to. There are other opportunities for impact ratings such as Google Analytics and Scopus Elsevier (SNIP) that some argue will increasingly take over. Others maintain that publishing in journals with the T-R rating, while it exists, is vital for young scientists' careers. We look forward to a lively debate. If you are not able to attend the conference, please email me with your views.

This issue of the journal displays the variety of its content and longitudinal resources deployed to achieve scientific aims and the journal's different modes of presentation. We start with three Research Papers devoted respectively to 'parental education and adult health outcomes' (in Sweden), 'effects of deleterious ageing' (in Scotland) and the 'effects of marital status transitions on depression' (in the USA). Two Research Notes follow respectively on 'life course influences on quality of life at age 50 years' and 'parental separation and adult psychological distress' (both in the UK). Following in the footsteps of the Michigan *Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID)* profiled in the last issue, we then have a Study Profile of the *Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA)*. Finally there is a review of the first twenty years 'Life History' of the pioneering UK Avon Longitudinal Survey of Parents and Children (ALSPAC) from the perspectives of 20 of the key actors who were involved at various stages. The source is an edited record of the Wellcome Trust's fortieth *History of Twentieth Century Medicine Witness Seminar*.