

Profile: Richard Gedye



Your editors met Richard Gedye at OUP on his first official day as Research Director. We could tell this because he was carrying a large piece of paper with 'Research Director' written on it. When challenged, he claimed this wasn't an aide memoire, but the start of writing his job description. We thought we could help him by finding out how he got to this position.

Richard grew up in one of the least fashionable parts of Sussex, Portslade-by-Sea, a suburb of Brighton where the beach disappears into the Shoreham Canal, to be swallowed by the industrial port. The Gedye family have always been salesmen – Richard's father was manager of the Portslade Co-operative Department store, where Richard started his sales career selling fridges in his vacations. His younger brother Tim is also a sales manager for a firm in the West Country. Older brother Phil has divided his career between teaching and painting/decorating (not at the same time).

After seven years at Hove Grammar School for Boys, Richard went on to study geography at St Catherine's, Oxford (which seems to produce a good class of publisher). After Oxford, he had no definite career in mind and interviewed with companies as varied as the UK Atomic Energy Authority, National Bus Company, Kimberley-Clark, IPC magazines and DeLaRue. He was offered the position of marketing assistant at Macmillan and joined them to take a long series of jobs. His initial role involved marketing books

directly to academics, with an eclectic portfolio of titles ranging from monographs on economic theory to motor vehicle maintenance workbooks. Working at Macmillan provided a valuable introduction to the power and value of the brand – *The Grove Dictionary of Music, Nature, Statesman's Year-Book* and *Papermac* (the only one that has not survived) were all part of the environment within which Richard worked. Of course, perhaps the most powerful brand of all was the Macmillan name itself, although the incomplete ownership of this name was to prove a challenge later, after Richard had moved from marketing books (eastern hemisphere only) to marketing journals globally. In the 1950s Macmillan had sold its US company and brand, so it could not use the Macmillan name in the United States. Trying to market Macmillan's journal list in the USA without using the Macmillan name involved highly convoluted (and sub-optimal) marketing, tricky decisions on the labelling of exhibition booths and two versions of all marketing literature, one branded (for most of the world) and one with just the name of the journal (for the USA).

In fact it had been in 1986 that Publishing Director Harry Holt approached Richard to take over from Alison Baverstock as Promotion Manager for Macmillan's specialist scientific journals. His first journal launch was *Oncogene*, a spin-off from *Nature*, with all the excellent papers that *Nature* had been rejecting. This taught Richard some valuable lessons: 1) the choice of a journal's external editor is all important: find someone hungry to get

on, not someone at the top of their profession; 2) don't assume that people in the US Midwest know what UK means (especially University of Kentucky fans). A returned response card, with UK crossed through, saying "try England" tells it all; and 3) when marketing an Irish medical journal in the US, mail all physicians with O' at the beginning of their surname.

Richard had worked with Kate Jury at Macmillan and in 1991 he was invited by her to join OUP's Science Medical and Journals Division as Science Journals Marketing Manager, working out of the old IRL Press offices on an industrial estate some eight miles out of Oxford in Eynsham. Martin Richardson was already running the journals 'mob' from the industrial estate (while the physical journals themselves resided in Walton Street splendour). After six months Richard was made Head of Marketing for all the journals, thereby adding the humanities and social science journals to his portfolio. Shortly afterwards he appointed Melinda Kenneway as Marketing Assistant and a formidable partnership was born. At the end of 1992, journals moved back to Walton Street, bringing books and journals teams back together under the same roof.

The move from marketing a purely scientific list to one which embraced science and humanities in almost equal quantity brought an introduction to a humanities culture which often had different values and priorities. For example, speed of publication, so important for the scientific community, was not always such a priority for a humanities journal. One journal editor, when urged by Richard to respond to the increased flow of submissions by considering an increase in the frequency of publication, demurred on the grounds

that it would make each published journal issue feel less like a book. This sense of each humanities journal issue having the characteristics of a book was not limited simply to its physical appearance but also to the way in which many editors planned their issues thematically. So, as online distribution started to replace print as the primary distribution channel for journal content, some humanities journal editors felt that, web linking technology notwithstanding, the tendency for individual articles within an issue to lose that sense of being part of a carefully constructed whole was a source of some regret.

Consequently it has been one of the highlights of Richard's time at Oxford Journals that he has, through the launch of the Oxford Journals digitized archive, been able to offer these editors a major benefit of the online medium – the ability to breathe new life into a discipline by reuniting it with part of its history which had previously been largely hidden and unvisited. Even more importantly, of course, this was a benefit which was also extended to countless other readers via national distribution agreements with organizations like JISC in the UK, DFG in Germany, CRKN in Canada, and CAUL in Australia.

Asked about other highlights of his OUP career, Richard picked out the development, from scratch, of new business models and new teams, selling the Oxford Journals online collection direct to individual libraries and consortia, thus bringing increased access and value to readers worldwide – from the very first agreement in 1999 with the JULAC consortium in Hong Kong (which he personally negotiated) to the situation today with professional business teams working out of offices in Oxford, Tokyo, Beijing, India and the USA, supporting online collection sales which grow significantly every year and now represent around a third of all institutional subscription revenue.

Career highlights apart, Richard believes that OUP represents an ideal publishing culture – financially responsible and astute, large enough to afford the investments necessary to remain at the forefront of new web-based distribution and marketing technologies and with enough critical mass of content to appear on the radar of key consortium purchasers, but rooted in the academic community (as a department of Oxford University), in touch with their developing needs and priorities and, because it does not need to obsess with the short-term financial demands of shareholders, able



Richard and daughter Sarah at Oxford station

to invest long term in developments that more closely reflect the aspirations of the individual academic communities that it serves. In this context Richard praises Martin Richardson's scientific approach to journal publishing, citing the example of OUP's open access initiatives which include an experiment using one of their most highly cited and established journals, *Nucleic Acids Research* (NAR). A significant and influential section of NAR's community lobbied for the journal to become completely open access. Rigorous market research indicated that the rest of the community whom the journal served would support this. So the open access experiment was launched, with detailed analysis of the effects on submission, usage, citations and financial viability, and with the results of the analyses being shared with the wider scientific and information community at every stage.

In his new role at OUP Richard anticipates maintaining a presence at key conferences like UKSG, Charleston and SSP but predicts that his family will welcome the reduction in sales trip travel. He and his wife Kate met in 1984, running the residents' association in their South London apartment block. In 1987 they married and moved to Winchester, where Kate works for the local Citizens Advice Bureau giving advice to people in their own homes, campaigning for their welfare rights and taking appeals to tribunals. Their daughter Sarah is 18 and has just been accepted by Central St Martin's College of Art and Design, and their son Matthew is about to go to Sixth Form College.

Always active in UKSG, Richard has been Treasurer and Marketing Officer. In the latter role he commissioned a new logo and launched the website, the original design and structure having been mapped out with Hazel Woodward over coffee in the Library at Loughborough. He currently chairs the Usage Factor Working Group and is on the main committee. He is an ardent supporter of UKSG because it brings together people from all parts of the information community, harnessing their different talents and experiences for the common good and allowing members to gain valuable insights into each other's world which can inform the strategies they develop and implement in their own environments. Asked why he thinks UKSG is so successful in its activities, he believes it is partly because of who is running it and the decisions they make, and partly because it

is the only forum where all participants can get together as equals and discuss issues honestly and practically without being unnecessarily partisan. Moving into the online arena, UKSG has become a globally inclusive organization where, despite the UKSG name, people working with journals, books and other media can share the same congenial and productive space.

Maybe Richard's best known achievement has been as founder and chair of COUNTER. In 2000 he was approached by Sally Morris from ALPSP, who reported that the PALS (Publishers and Library Solutions) group wanted to develop a code of practice for usage statistics. Would he be prepared to form and lead a working group to bring some order to the area? He accepted the challenge and, after a thorough study of existing initiatives and their accumulated expertise (most notably ICOLC's guidelines and ARL's E-Metrics project), convened an international meeting in London of some 50 specially invited experts from all sections of the information community, facilitated by consultants Bev Bruce and Judy Luther. An incredibly intensive and productive day-long session ensued, out of which emerged the basic structure of what became COUNTER's first Code of Practice. The meeting was critical for the success of the COUNTER project in at least two other ways. Firstly it was an essential part of ensuring that all the key stakeholders were involved from the beginning. Secondly it led to the discovery of people with key skills and knowledge, like Oliver Pesch from EBSCO, Marthyn Borghuis from Elsevier, David Sommer from Blackwell (at the time) and Timo Hannay from Nature Publishing, who were working in the area and who went on to contribute generously and incredibly effectively to the successful transition of COUNTER from a research project to the authoritative body on usage statistics that it is today.

Nevertheless it became apparent quite early on that, to achieve all its aims, COUNTER needed an investment in human resource that volunteers alone could not supply. The consequent appointment of Peter Shepherd as COUNTER director was probably the most important decision Richard made on behalf of the project. Peter is now both the glue that keeps all the constituent aspects of COUNTER working effectively together and the administrative energy that ensures it maintains the kind of momentum that has already attracted over 100 publishers, vendors, and hosts to produce



Richard amongst the bluebells in Micheldever Woods

COUNTER-compliant usage reports and has ensured that the Codes have evolved at an appropriate pace to keep up with changes in product development, information technology and user behaviour.

When asked about his hobbies, Richard quotes Dave Barry saying “there is a fine line between hobbies and mental illness”. His main hobby has been trying to get out of sport, even from his days in Portslade where the house backed onto the golf course and he and his brother Phil used to sneak onto the third tee and hit found golf balls with lead pipes. His brother was given a 5 iron and went on to join the golf club, Richard preferred listening to popular music (and, as we know from the UKSG quiz, is an authority on all music produced since the 1950s). Those of us that live or work in Oxford have frequently been knocked off the Walton Street pavement by Richard flying down to catch his train back to Winchester, so he does walk at least two miles every day and was indeed the President of the Oxford University Rambling Club and its original Oxfam annual walk planner.

So getting round to his job description for Research Director, what is involved in Richard’s new job? He already spends a lot of time representing OUP on UKSG, COUNTER, the Usage Factor Working Group, Project Transfer, and projects like the Research Information Network’s research into the usage and impact of e-journals in the UK and the proposed Academic Publishing in the European Research Area (APER) research project. The new job will formalize a lot of this commitment and add to it a specific remit to conduct research for OUP on stakeholder activity, particularly in relation to changing practices and unmet needs. Many of the results of this research will be actioned via the harnessing of appropriate technology. OUP believes that much appropriate technical development arises from and is embedded in the academic communities that it seeks to serve. As someone whose career up to now has brought him into extensive contact with these communities, Richard feels that his new position represents a wonderful opportunity to learn more about these technologies and to encourage initiatives which will allow the development of their full potential to benefit all sections in the information delivery chain.

But if technology is a significant factor in addressing many of the issues facing the information world today, what are some of those issues? Richard believes that two of the most important are the interlinked issues of establishing unique identity (especially at the level of the work, the author, and the institution) and usage metrics, both areas where he has started and supported important initiatives.

So we left Richard writing his job description and setting priorities for the next few months and years.