

From the Editors

Time to Say Goodbye

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In the words of Geoffrey Chaucer, “All Good Things Must Come to an End.” Chaucer is credited with the original use of this idiom in his poem, *Troilus and Criseyde*, which was published in the 1300s. Although his poem is about a tragic tale of two lovers within the city of Troy, the idiom describes the sentiment about how all things are temporary in life. His words apply to our time as editors of *JCS*.

We have served as editors for *Journal of Case Studies* since 2011, and the time has certainly flown by. The journal will be under new leadership with Beth Jones and Britt Shirley taking the helm, beginning with the 2019 publications (Volume 37). We are lucky that these two strong leaders within our organization have agreed to take over the journal. We know it will grow and develop under their excellent editorship.

In this last “From the Editors article,” we wanted to achieve three objectives to:

- highlight the changes made to the journal during our tenure as editors,
- overview the articles in this issue, and
- thank you.

Changes Made to the Journal

When we first took over as editors in 2011-2012, universities had started to integrate quality measures into their evaluation of journal articles for faculty. Some members of SCR had been saying to the board that their school would no longer consider *Annual Advances of Business Cases* (SCR’s original Tier 2 journal) as an acceptable publication at their university. *Annual Advances of Business Cases* appeared too similar to a conference proceeding because it was only published once per year, following our summer workshop, and its quality ratings in Cabell’s Directories of Publishing Opportunities were not sufficient.

Thus, we were charged to rebrand the journal. We first renamed the journal to *Journal of Case Studies* to better reflect what the journal was, and we published two issues of the journal per year. We also moved the journal online and would like to thank East Carolina University for hosting the site all of these years. Moving the journal online achieved several goals. First, it streamlined the distribution as the journal used to be published on CD and mailed to members. Second, it cut the costs for the organization and its members, as ECU provided the hosting for free and SCR no longer had to incur mailing costs for the CDs. Third, it updated the look and feel of the journal to one that is consistent with several other professional organizations within our field.

Another early change that we made to the *Journal of Case Studies* was to add the “From the Editors” article at the beginning of each issue of publication. Our intent was to provide tutorials that would help Society for Case Research members improve their case writing efforts. Topics of these articles have ranged from how to get ideas for case research, ways to improve the hook, the necessity of permissions, characteristics of a good case and teaching note, how faculty may use cases in the classroom, and the need for cases that focus on diversity and inclusion. Each of the “From the Editor” articles also highlighted cases in that particular issue that related to the topic of the discussion in our article. These highlights provided recognition of the strength of the authors’ cases in each issue. We have had fun writing these “From the Editor” articles, highlighting the excellent cases in each issue, and would like to thank those of you who were gracious enough to let us know you learned something from the effort.

We also began the inclusion of a student assistant to work with us on journal matters. We particularly appreciated their work as they helped on day to day journal communications as well as website organization, layout, and publication. The Department of Health Services and Information Management at East Carolina University provided the student assistantships, and we thank the Department and ECU for the support. As you peruse the articles written in the “From the Editors” section from 2012 forward, you will see the students’ scholarship. We enjoyed working with them, and we thank them for their professionalism and energy. We were told by the students that their favorite part of the experience was working as a team with the case researchers who were passionate about their work and exhibited professionalism. As assistants to the *Journal of Case Studies*, they also reported that they learned about the importance of effective communication, collaboration, and root cause analysis. Moreover, one student assistant commented that the synergy that was shared among the *Journal of Case Studies*’ team of reviewers and editors allowed for the Journal to better serve our case writing community and uphold an effective system to publish excellent cases annually. Last, they noted that they appreciated the opportunity to learn and experience working on the journal about what it takes to create, edit, and publish well formatted, real-life cases.

The student assistants from 2011-2018 were:

- Daniel Kerrigan 2011-2012
- Shannon Davis 2012-2013
- Kayla Ford 2013-2015
- Eric Woodruff 2015-2017
- Jenyqua Young 2017-2018

Once we established these early changes (rebranding, implementing rigorous standards, publishing on the Web, writing the “From the Editors,” and involving students), we dug into the normal tasks of editing as our work proceeded over time. For those of you who have not served as an editor, this set of tasks involves managing the review process. This process begins with setting a yearly timeline for the members of the organization, moves onto receiving submissions, then shifts to recruiting reviewers, and gathering up the reviews. Once the reviews are all in, the editors read those carefully, make decisions about the next step for the case, and then write a detailed letter to the authors, noting changes that are needed to address the reviewers’ comments.

These letters are then emailed to the authors, along with the deadline for revision and resubmission.

The process then starts over again in which the authors submit the revised cases and teaching notes, which are then sent to reviewers. Sometimes this can take up to three rounds of review if the case is not rejected. However, once the cases are accepted, the editors then shift gear and spend time providing a detailed edit of the writing and formatting of the case. And finally, we set up each case for publication with sequencing, pagination, and headers, before posting them to the journal website. Once posted on the website, we then send the cases and teaching notes to our Executive Director of SCR (presently, this is Kay Hodge) who handles the distribution to our other publication outlets, such as Ebschost and McGraw Hill, among others.

Other aspects of the editors' job at SCR include providing input to the board on the best reviewer award, the Philip C. Fisher service award, and select the best case for the Journal of Case Studies on an annual basis. This is a true benefit to the editor's job as we got to help the organization provide recognition to the quiet folks within our group who are doing outstanding work and making a contribution to the field of case writing. As editors, we spent a significant amount of time each year looking over the published cases and reviews in order to select those who are to be recognized. We would like to thank the Society for Case Research for allowing us to be part of these award processes and for having such awesome members who deserve recognition.

As we settled into the job of the editor with the *Journal of Case Studies* over time, we also began to tackle the quality issues with the journal. This involved slowly lowering the acceptance rate. Currently, the rate is consistently at 15 – 20 percent. Our reviewers from the membership of SCR stepped up to the plate and provided excellent reviews and fewer cases were being accepted. Thank you to those of you who had reviewed for the journal.

Several years into our tenure with SCR, the publications board decided that the organization needed a clearer set of formatting requirements that also were consistent across all three of the journals that we published. Craig Davis, Editor of the *Business Case Journal*, led a committee that was charged to revamp the guidelines and find a more user-friendly way of presenting them to the members of our organization. Again, we were part of that committee to redo the guidelines, but the bulk of the work was done by Craig Davis and Amanda Weed. We would like to acknowledge the role that they played in revising the manuscript guidelines in a timely and efficient manner. Its people like Craig, and the other awesome, hard-working members of the SCR board, that have made this job enjoyable year after year.

After the guidelines were reformatted, some other issues emerged that were external to the organization that had a significant impact on the *Journal of Case Studies*. Specifically, Cabell's Directories of Publishing Opportunities had been criticized for including predatory journals among the lists of publications in which they were providing credentials. Cabell's set out to change the review process that they utilized to include (or exclude) journal within their directories. This proved to be a significant task for the *Journal of Case Studies*, as the new Cabell's guidelines required not only much more in-depth information from us but also forced the organization to reconsider some of our long-standing policies within the Society for Case Research. A true benefit that resulted from this process for our members is that an author no

longer has to attend our conference in order to submit to the *Journal of Case Studies*. Furthermore, while we prefer that authors follow our timeline for review, it is now a suggestion and no longer a requirement. We presently provide reviews at other points during the year. Thus, the flexibility for submission to JCS for authors has been improved significantly under our tenure as editors.

Another external force that caused us to have to change the *Journal of Case Studies* was based on a complaint we received related to a publication of a case. While investigating the complaint, we realized that some authors had not published completely truthful information in their case. This is an issue as SCR's policies require that all cases are based on real, factual events. No part of a case can be fabricated. Furthermore, if a case is based on primary sources, such as speaking with someone at a company, then all people interviewed need to have read the case and signed off on their permission to publish. Alternatively, if a case is based completely off of secondary sources, then there needs to be a citation supporting the material in the case. These policies were in place long before we took over as editors but we have made certain they were enforced.

Moreover, since these issues are both related to ethical and legal research practices, we felt strongly that the journal and our organization needed legal guidance. Thus, along with the SCR board, we worked with a copyright attorney to develop a set of new release forms for the organization, which are now available on the SCR website (www.sfcrcjs.org). While these release forms may seem somewhat restrictive, they are designed to protect the organization from unethical research practices and are consistent with how other journals handle their releases. Thus, we put forth that these were necessary changes for the organization's credibility. Our final innovation as editors of the *Journal of Case Studies* is happening this year, and we are excited about it. In 2017, SCR decided to partner with the Global Jesuit Case Series (GJCS). This has been an excellent partnership as they helped co-sponsor our summer workshop at Rockhurst University in Kansas City and also invited some case writers from their organization to join us. Some of the GJCS attendees were new to case writing. As part of the partnership, the *Journal of Case Studies* agreed to publish a special issue each year that focused on Jesuit Principles and was co-branded with the GJCS. This means that we have now taken the *Journal of Case Studies* from two to three issues per year. And the first JCS-GJCS special issue is coming out in May 2018. Furthermore, the best case among those submitted through the GJCS was selected for publication in the *Business Case Journal* (our premier journal) and will also be coming out this year. We look forward to seeing more future special issues in partnership with the GJCS, as the cases were particularly interesting in that issue with the emphasis on sustainability, globalism, leadership, and ethics.

In This Issue

Like all of the issues we have published, this issue contains some very interesting cases, spread across a variety of disciplines. In the field of marketing, we have the case titled, "A Tree Dies and a Pub Suffers," by Cox et al. (2018). In this case, a pub is known for its 100 year-old tree in which the patrons sit underneath most of the year while enjoying their beer. Because of the size and location, it was not feasible to replace the tree and the owner was trying to figure out another solution (awning, etc.). Not only does this case have an interesting name, it has the potential to provide both quantitative analysis (i.e., the financials of the different options) and qualitative

analysis (i.e., what would make the customers feel more at home because they are losing their lovely tree) in its classroom application.

Another marketing case that is in this issue is called, “Forum Credit Union: Implementing a First-Time Home Buyer Program,” and the author is McQuiston (2018). In this case, a credit union employee is working on adding a new product line, specifically mortgage loans, to the company’s offerings. In the process, the credit union has to sort through a plethora of data that they have to develop a set of actionable insights, as well as figure out how to educate millennials and target first time home buyers.

The case, “Managing Innovation without Managers: Valve Corp,” by Thornblad (2018) is unique in that it has both marketing and management implications. This case is about a successful computer game company (a topic that instructors inform us that students appreciate), and their new product development process. What is unique about the company and their processes is they have a flat management structure. No employee has a manager. This structure has assisted the company in releasing some very popular new products (which are financially lucrative), but also presents a unique set of challenges at the same time.

The case, “Robin’s Risky Re-Do: A Services Marketing Challenge,” by Smith and Brotherton (2018) also combines marketing and management. However, the company for this case is a beauty salon, located within a small Midwestern town that is economically depressed. In addition to being located in a town that is struggling, the owner of the business also thinks she needs to garner a greater income from the business. Thus, the owner was looking for ways to increase revenues or reduce expenses. However, she is also concerned that changing her salon’s business model will negatively impact her customers and potentially end up hurting sales, instead of increasing them.

This issue also contains a third case that has both marketing and management implications, “Scooterino: Ride Sharing in Rome” (Chandra, Bhowmick, Chaabi, and Smith, 2018). This case is about the sharing economy as Scooterino is a European version of Uber or Lyft. This new business venture earns revenue by connecting drivers with passengers via an app. To date, the company has escaped regulatory restrictions. However, as the company grows, it is likely to face competitive pushbacks from taxi cartels and potential regulation from competitive complaints.

Shifting gears, we also have a management ethics case in this issue about General Motors (Wanasika and Conner, 2018). This case is interesting because it is descriptive and overviews the ongoing problems that General Motors had related to its defective ignition switches. There was a series of events and decisions within the company over a ten-year period that led to more than 100 deaths of consumers and the recall of millions of vehicles. This series of events, along with the decisions of management, and the resulting investigation by the federal government is discussed.

We also have a couple of accounting cases within this issue. The case, “If You Can’t Take the Heat, Get Out of the Kitchen: Calculating the Costs of Fire at Southern Hospitality Inn,” by Ladwig, Schwieger, and Lawhorn (2018), is about an accountant who is responsible for providing projected costs and lost operating revenues of an inn and restaurant that had burned

down. These projections were to be submitted to the insurance company as part of the claim for the loss, but because the company had not been in operation for a year, the accountant had to come up with a creative way to develop an accurate and fair set of projections.

The publication by Johnson and Brennan (2018), entitled “Northflow Solutions, Inc.: Using ABC to Create a New Pricing Model,” is another accounting case within this issue. In this case, a relatively young accountant is tasked with using activity-based costing (ABC) to determine and improve the accuracy of overhead allocation for a software company. After this analysis, the accountant would use that data to help the company improve its pricing model and profitability per customer. Having a case on activity-based costing is a great addition to this issue as it is a common topic taught in managerial accounting cases; so, it is a popular topic for faculty that are looking for cases to use in their classroom.

And finally, we also have one finance case in this issue. The case, “Sears’ Spinoff of Lands’ End” (Van Dalsem, 2018) is about a holding corporations’ spinoff of one of its major divisions into an independent business entity. This was the fourth divestiture of a division within the company in three years as Sears was having financial difficulties. As part of the spinoff, existing Sears’ shareholders were given shares of stock in the new business venture. In addition, the terms of the spinoff included a large cash dividend to be paid by Lands’ End to Sears. The cash for this dividend came from the proceeds of a significant loan from Bank of America. This case is an ideal choice for a finance class, as the information provided can be used to illustrate complex issues related to corporate divestitures, costs of capital, and the macroeconomic environment.

In conclusion, as you can see from the descriptions above, there is a diverse set of interesting and useful cases within this issue. We are proud of the work produced by the authors and know that each article provides a unique contribution. In addition, when combined together, these cases make a whole issue that is particularly strong.

Thank You and the Society for Case Research

We thank you, the members of the Society for Case Research. We have enjoyed our time serving the organization and you. Furthermore, our time on the board has been very rewarding. We are honored that the board and organization selected us to serve as editors for the *Journal of Case Studies* back in 2011. And, we appreciate the support that the board members, the reviewers, the authors, the student assistants, and the various members of the organization have provided to us over the years.

In working with the case researchers, reviewers from our organization, and the East Carolina University student assistants, we shared the goal to make JCS a publication worthy of the readers. JCS was established to provide a continual flow of effective up-to-date cases to promote excellence in case research, writing, and teaching. We have continued to promote this mission and also made several significant changes that we believe have resulted in a better journal for the Society of Case Research. We hope you have been pleased with the researchers’ work, our work as editors, and the publications over time, and we again thank you for putting your faith in us to serve.

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