

New guest editorial feature launched

A privileged vehicle

With effect from the next volume the *International Journal of Law in the Built Environment (IJLBE)* is pleased to announce the launch of a new guest editorial feature. This is an important development for a journal which seeks to challenge established disciplinary and other approaches, and to encourage new perspectives on knowledge, and knowledge creation, within its areas of operation. Previous editorials have explored the breadth of meaning that can be attributed to the term “legal scholarship” and it is hoped that some of these discussions might have provided food for thought for legal scholars, as well as for their counterparts within the built environment disciplines. But they represent the views of a single editor who, until now, has had the unique privilege of being able to indulge his own ideas in a peer-reviewed journal in a format which is exempt from normal academic conventions or expectations. Those with differing perspectives have had no equivalent right of reply and no similarly privileged vehicle in which to explore their own views on the issues in question, or indeed on any other tentative issues and ideas that could usefully be introduced to readers of the journal.

The world of the built environment researcher (and arguably, with the remorseless advance of socio-legal studies, the world of the legal scholar as well) is one in which empiricism holds increasing sway. In such a world the term “research” is often synonymous with the concept of empirical investigation, and often with an unswerving allegiance to the scientific method and to the tenets of positivism. We would do well to remind ourselves that knowledge is ultimately a product of the creativity of the human mind rather than an inevitable result of data collection. In the words of the American sociologist C. Wright Mills, the purpose of empirical inquiry is simply “to settle disagreements and doubts about facts, and thus to make arguments more fruitful by basing all sides more substantively” He reminds us that “facts discipline reason; but reason is the advance guard in any field of learning.” (Mills 1967, p. 205).

An invitation for radical thinking

The launch of this journal’s guest editorial feature therefore provides an important opportunity for other writers to utilise their intellectual creativity and, through argument and reason, to contribute something novel to the broader discipline that might not be possible (or permissible) in the format of a peer-reviewed article. The scope of such editorials in this particular journal is almost unlimited. It has been suggested above that they might address the nature of legal scholarship but they could certainly do far more than this. They would normally be expected to relate, in some way, to either law or the built environment, in an academic, policy or professional context. They might equally, however, have something broader to say, for example about current developments in higher education, or indeed about some more general feature of society. The law is a social entity and the study and practice of law encourages the development of a critical

and analytical approach to the subject, and to much else besides. This critical characteristic of the legal mind means that lawyers are often to be found in the forefront of movements for social change throughout the world, and are often more vocal exponents of change than those who have been schooled in other disciplines. The guest editorial feature seeks to harness these characteristics amongst its readers and to publish original, challenging, and sometimes controversial editorials that have the capacity to change the way we think about law, the built environment or indeed about our wider world and society.

In common with other Emerald journals that include a guest editorial feature, editorials published in the *IJLBE* will include full search functionality in order to enhance their visibility and therefore their capacity for citation in future academic publications. They will be easily discoverable online through incorporation in the Emerald database and the inclusion of abstracts, search tags and reference links. All editorials submitted to the journal for possible publication should, therefore, include a structured abstract and keywords in the same way as the peer-reviewed articles published within its pages. Editorials should be a minimum of 1,500 words in length (not including the structured abstract) but should not exceed 5,000 words.

Readers are, therefore, invited to use this new facility as a soapbox from which to expound and test their novel and original ideas. As will be clear from the above account, although all contributions must be properly argued, and responsibly (and respectfully) expressed, this is certainly an invitation for radical thinking. Potential authors are invited to contact me in advance with an outline of potential guest editorials before submitting the final copy for possible publication in the journal. I hope that this new feature will be attractive to authors as well as having the potential to increase the influence and visibility of a journal that strives for academic excellence but also for open-mindedness and tolerance of new ways of thinking.

Paul Chynoweth

Reference

Mills, C.W. (2000), *The Sociological Imagination*, Fortieth Anniversary Edition, Oxford University Press, New York, NY.