Editorial

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Your Institute, which has just finished celebrating its 20th anniversary, has from its inception had two distinct, but closely related, functions. First, it is *the* professional body for all those with a stake in any form of direct marketing, providing them with a wide range of opportunities to hear, read, discuss and debate the latest developments in their field, and to network with their peers in the company of some of the most successful entrepreneurs in the business; second, it provides an essential and unrivalled service to the industry, in the UK and a growing number of countries overseas, by providing educational opportunities, and qualifications, to the next generation of direct marketers.

The IDM is the owner of the most authoritative, complete and widespread educational programme in direct marketing anywhere in the world. As such, it is inevitable — indeed essential — that its umbrella shelters not only the 4,000 or so practitioners who make up the bulk of its membership but also significant numbers of academics, some of whom adorn the editorial board of this journal. Essential because, of course, education involves exposure not only to real-life practice but also to the theoretical principles which, as some would have it, give rise to the practice, or, as others would maintain, are derived from it.

The IDM then, and this journal in particular, is dedicated to bridging — or better still eliminating — the gap which is still seen in some quarters to exist between academic and practitioner. This gap is the subject of an interesting think piece in another (academic) journal which we have abstracted in this issue (see Abstracts: ‘*A Marketing Paradox*’ ref. 9402). At bottom, this is a discussion of how knowledge, in any given subject, is best nurtured: is it by gradual accumulative building on established principles (which may in time produce an ossified structure that inhibits new thinking) or by daring to jettison received wisdom when it no longer meets changed circumstances, and re-thinking the basics?

No doubt we could all agree that both processes are needed from time to time. But as practitioners and as teachers in direct marketing, we are accused of living for too long on outdated mantras, such as the 4 Ps, or AIDA, or the Boston matrix, and being unwilling to think creatively outside of our self-constructed box. It should not matter whether new thinking is inspired by theoreticians or from practical experience; what matters is that it gets done, and is made widely available. That then is the dual function of this journal: to nurture the incremental development of tried and tested marketing practices and concepts, while never forgetting to search out new directions to meet new circumstances.

If we look at the last number (9/3) of this journal, we find that this is a Special Issue devoted to the new circumstances of Web 2.0. The articles in that issue are not written by academic theorists, nor based upon 50-year old concepts — they are about the marketing implications of a series of self-propagating internet-related phenomena (blogs, social networks, etc) to which marketing practitioners must react now: in this case at least the theory must, for a time, follow the practice rather than dictating it. And our authors, distinguished though their academic qualifications are, make a living at the sharp end of the business, as practitioners or consultants.

With the current issue we are, for the time being, back on more familiar ground, tilted by a cast of workers with a foot in either camp, and building on well-established themes. John Sauvé-Rodd completes his thesis on the individual assessment of donor profitability (see issue 9/1 for the first part). In a second foray into the field of not-for-profit organisations, Professor Sargeant *et al.* expose the fallacy of judging a charity’s performance by the ratio of its fund-raising costs to revenues.

Messrs Cuthbertson and Messenger contribute a piece on collaborative CRM — that is to say, collaboration in CRM projects between retailers and their suppliers.

Luke McKeever's contribution on data optimisation is an edited version of his paper presented at the IDM seminar in 2007; we have an award-winning case study from VisitScotland, an Opinion Piece on complaint handling by Mike Hayward, a Legal & Regulatory Update, and the usual Abstracts and Book Review.

Whether your primary interest is academic or practical, whether you are by nature an incrementalist or a lateral thinker, we aim both to provide material that fits your existing predilections, and to tempt you to graze occasionally on the other side of the fence.

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