Editorial

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The main item of news to announce in this issue is the sudden, and unexpected, retirement of Robin Fairlie as Editor of *JDDDDMP* due to ill health.

For younger readers, Robin may simply be the Editor of *JDDDDMP*, perhaps also the Editor of the IDM Marketing Guide. However, many older readers will, hopefully, be aware of Robin's wider, deeper and profound contribution to the development of the direct marketing sector over many years, and his role in the creation of the IDM. Along with Derek Holder, Robin has in so many ways helped bring professionalism to a sector of marketing that for many years was much derided by consumers, and often treated by many marketing managers as 'second class' — the split into 'above' and 'below' (where direct marketing lies) the line commonly attributed to different channels implying that perception.

I am writing this Editorial in my role as a member of the *JDDDDMP* Executive Board, but as you will read, there is more to it than that from a personal perspective. So here are some of the highlights from Robin's long career in the direct marketing sector, and why we all owe him a big debt of gratitude. Robin's career path also provides a picture of a world where specialist skills were acquired in a very different way than today, and where flexibility was of paramount importance in seizing the opportunities in a new sector built on the application of emerging technologies.

In at the dawn of commercial computing and database marketing

With a degree in History from Cambridge, but with no IT training, Robin joined Remington R and Univac (the company that apparently invented the term 'software') in 1958 as a computer salesman for their commercial division. This was at a time when IT manufacturers began to exploit the growing need for their equipment outside the scientific community — a trail initially blazed earlier in that decade by J Lyons' (teas and cafes) computer division (which became ICL).

Establishing the principles of database marketing at Readers' Digest Association (RDA)

Robin later became Technical Support Manager, and all this experience led in 1962 to Robin being hired by RDA in the United Kingdom as Computer Planning Manager, and installing their first computer the following year. This ran what may well be the first integrated marketing database in the world (before the parent RDA USA), containing merged details from across the organization of 1.5 million customer records — and well before the days of relational database structures. This needed a name and address matching process, developed in-house as there was no expertise elsewhere to call on. Robin's responsibilities included promotion and fulfillment, and in 1969 he joined the UK Board as Business Services Director.

As the then largest user of their postal services, Robin also played a key role in helping the Post Office develop their Mailsort technologies, and RDA became one of the founder users of the Postal Address File. RDA's direct marketing operation in the United Kingdom was 'the gold standard', establishing principles for developing and managing a customer database that still apply today.

By the time I joined the Automobile Association (AA) in 1971, the AA and RDA were already partners in Drive Publications that produced *Drive* magazine, mailed monthly to all AA members, and a series of phenomenally successful 'coffee table' books produced and primarily sold by direct mail to members of both organizations. For example, RDA achieved response rates of up to

20 per cent for mailings to new AA members of the latest annual Drive publication! Robin's legacy here was that the AA gained first-hand experience in how to develop and use marketing databases for market research and direct marketing purposes, both to administer memberships and target direct marketing efficiently and effectively; all put to good use in the new systems we then developed from the early 1980s onwards and on into the CRM era of the late 1990s, still applying many of the principles laid down by the RDA in the 1960s. So I personally owe a lot of my subsequent career at the AA to the foundations laid by Robin at the RDA.

Championing the direct marketing sector

By 1974, Robin was involved in setting up the Mail Users Association and a joint RDA/Littlewoods initiative to data capture the Electoral Roll, creating a major resource for the mail order and direct mail sector, which also led to one of the earliest uses of census statistics for modelling response and customer profitability.

Change came in 1980 when Robin was head-hunted to join Collier, Macmillan to develop a computer system for book ordering by libraries. However, in 1982, the company was sold to John Menzies, leading to Robin being asked to help the Post Office set up the Direct Mail Services Standards Board and he was appointed its first Chief Executive in 1983. In 1987, Robin set up his own consultancy, which he very successfully ran for 11 years, during which time he helped establish the DMA as the sector's umbrella trade body and acting as Editor of the Mailsort Users Guide.

The IDM connection

It was also during this period that Robin first worked with Derek Holder, initially as a Lecturer at Kingston Polytechnic (now Kingston University), and later as a Founder member of the Direct Marketing Centre. We both served on Derek's small advisory group that led to the formation of the IDM, Robin being responsible for drafting the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the IDM Code of Conduct and being a Founder member of the Professional Standards Board and Nominations Committee and serving on the IDM Council (where we first met).

In 1998, Robin retired from consultancy and was invited by Derek to become Editor of 'Marketing Directions', the first iteration of what is now *JDDDM*, and I was invited to become a Founder member of the journal's Executive Board. Therefore, when in 2004 I was invited by the Market Research Society to become Editor-in-Chief of their journal, Robin's experience, advice and his blueprint for journal editorship were all invaluable to me in deciding how to approach such a challenging role. Robin's excellent skills as an editor were also put to further good use when Derek appointed him as Editor of the second edition of the IDM Direct Marketing Guide. Not surprisingly, Robin is also a Visiting Fellow at Kingston University, and was one of the first Honorary Fellows of the IDM.

Laying the foundations of direct marketing

Throughout a rich and long career, Robin has played a leading role in building the core foundations of the direct marketing sector we know today — whether it be the technologies that facilitate the marketing process; the analytical capabilities that create efficient, profitable targeted communications; the structure that underpins postcode based geography; the development of the trade-body structure necessary to integrate and promote the sector; the education and training of those working in the sector and drafting the standards that have all helped establish and develop the expertise and professionalism of the sector. You will also see the principles laid down years ago by Robin reflected in several parts of the IDM Award in Data Management, successfully launched in 2011. What these achievements also imply is a personality that encourages cooperation

and gains commitment from others, often in very challenging situations. And, despite all these other achievements, I know that Robin felt that establishing and editing the journal represented one of the most important, and enjoyable, milestones in his career. Finally, in an age of specialisms, it is interesting to speculate whether it would be possible for Robin's career to be easily replicated today.

In compiling this, I am indebted to Richard Webber's notes from a recent conversation with Robin, and on behalf of myself, and the other Executive Board members, I would like to wish Robin well for the future.

Data management: New challenges, old solutions

I think that Robin Fairlie would have been nodding in agreement with many of the points made by Oliver Glanville in his Keynote address at the recent 'DataQNow' Conference, organized by DQM and chaired by David Reed, held on 21 June at the new St Pauls Conference centre in London.

A history lesson in data-driven marketing

The programme announced that Glanville, Head of CRM at Pfizer, would focus on how effective data management is essential in delivering customer satisfaction. However, in the event Glanville chose as his theme 'The challenges of obtaining management buy-in for CRM', and in doing so reminded us that many of the principles established in Robin's era in developing and implementing technology projects in marketing still remain to be embraced by organizations today.

This was a salutary reminder of why technology projects will fail if the foundations to deliver commitment vertically and horizontally within the organization are not built. I was preaching this message in the 1980s, based on experiences within the AA, and again when running the IDM CRM Certificate programme in the mid-noughties, but it would appear that we need to continually promote this message within conferences to hopefully prevent investment in technologies being wasted.

This need for commitment was further underlined in a subsequent presentation from Richard Parfitt and Greg Womack, describing the Royal Mint's plans to commemorate the two key events in 2012, the Royal Jubilee and the Olympics, with special coins and the development of their direct marketing-based strategy to facilitate sales to previous and potential customers for their commemorative products through a partnership with Experian. A textbook case study in developing a direct marketing campaign.

Harnessing the new technologies

Mark Swensen (Aprimo) warned of the perils posed to marketing strategy by siloed channels and advocated a skills audit to identify the key gaps in analytical, project management and technical competencies. A culture that encourages experimental curiosity and holistic thinking is also critical to success.

Steve Martin (Nectar) reminded delegates that interactions are as important as transactions, arguing that unlike oil, data is a cheap, ubiquitous, renewable resource — it is the analytical capability that is scarce. Relationships must increase in value over time; that value increases in line with the level of trust, and this process is fuelled by insight.

Finally, Elizabeth Kessick (JustGiving) gave a fascinating keynote presentation on the transformation taking place in the charity fund raising sector facilitated by online technologies. Currently, only 7 per cent of giving is online, but people power, transparency and empowerment are creating imaginative and innovative approaches, such as the recent cases of Martha Payne's school dinner blog raising over £95,000 for the Mary's Meals charity, and Claire Squires'

unfortunate death in the 2012 London Marathon leading to over £1 million pledges for the Samaritans, her chosen charity.

Overall, the conference reminded us that harnessing the potential from ‘big data’ requires a mixture of principles laid down many years ago in the direct sector, and imaginative solutions that maximize the potential offered by new technology. Harking back to Robin Fairlie’s career, really, that’s no change then!

The papers

In this issue you will find a perspective on Facebook, as Di Pietro and Pantaro explore its effectiveness as a tool in influencing consumer behaviour. Stroud argues in his paper that the government’s strategy focusing on digital channels for communication with citizens and for access to public services ignores the ‘digitally excluded’ — those without access, or refuse, to use these channels. Chaffey and Patron describe the development of digital analytics and discuss how the underlying methods can be extended to facilitate marketing optimization. Finally, Rowe and BurrIDGE describe how eye-tracking technologies can be used to develop more effective email campaigns.

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