EDITORIAL

Letter from the new Editor

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It is an honor and a privilege to assume the editorship of the *Journal of International Business Studies*. JIBS today is testament to the far-sighted vision that led a small group of pioneering international business scholars to found the Academy of International Business and the first scholarly international business research journal. It was instructive for me to learn from its inception in 1969 it was determined that JIBS would have a strong research emphasis.

I recall my early academic career as an assistant professor of management at NYU, having conversations with John Fayerweather about his vision and belief in the emerging importance of international teaching and research in business schools. Not unlike many of my contemporaries it was many years later before I came to recognize how prescient was this early group of international scholars.

The inaugural issue of JIBS was published in Spring of 1970 under the editorship of Ernest W. Ogram Jr. In the ensuing 32 years JIBS has become the recognized pre-eminent journal in international business studies, with a worldwide readership. However, as the world of international business scholarship is diffusing more and more into the underlying social sciences of business schools and the traditional functional areas, JIBS increasingly will face the question of relevance. The new editorial team of JIBS firmly believes that the journal must continue its leading role of *defining international business studies*.

However, as international business studies has come into its own as a major research domain for scholars in business schools and the underlying social sciences, the scope of international business studies has changed as well. New questions are being raised about received theory on internationalization, limits to free markets, globalization and equity, democracy of capital and globalization, Internet-based network organizational forms and global management, unanticipated consequences of FDI in developing economies, rise of anti-globalization social movements...and the list goes on. To open JIBS to these and other emerging themes the new JIBS editorial team is placing renewed emphasis on attracting new and important theoretical papers that extend the intellectual reach of international business, bridge disciplinary boundaries, and break out of the single-theme research silos. Towards this end JIBS has abolished the distinction between long and short research papers, page limits on papers and submission fees.

The new editorial structure of the journal is our attempt to come to grips with this new expanded scope. The office of the Editor-in-Chief has been expanded to include five Associate Editors-in-Chief.

Each is responsible for one or more of the eight new editorial areas. The changes are intended to better match the research interests of authors with specific departmental editors. The journal has been decomposed into eight editorial areas: *economics, finance and accounting; marketing, consumer behavior and supply chain management; business dynamics and strategy; organization and management; culture, conflict and cognition; political economy, public policy and political science; entrepreneurship, emerging industries and locales; and strategic HR and industrial relations*. Each of the eight editorial areas is guided by two or more departmental editors who are responsible for handling the reviewing of papers and for making the editorial decision that is binding on the Editor in Chief. Many of the new departmental editors are younger, up and coming international business scholars. The Associate Editors in Chief and I expect that this structure will better convey the scope and range of scholarship of interest to JIBS.

The new departmental editors are assisted by a new JIBS Editorial Review Board. The composition of the new board reflects the nominations of the departmental editors and the Associate Editors in Chief, who were asked to nominate at least four scholars to the new board. The new Editorial Review Board members are committed to give JIBS manuscripts priority in reviewing, and to complete their reviews within 30 days. Each paper, however, will also be reviewed by an *ad hoc* reviewer and by a third reviewer chosen from nominations by the author (please refer to the new author manuscript submission guidelines for details). To further reduce delays in submission and processing of papers all manuscripts can be submitted on line, and all administrative transactions with departmental editors and reviewers are performed on line. This new capability centralizes the handling of papers and monitoring of reviewers in the offices of the managing editors at Duke and Erasmus Universities, and greatly reduces the administrative burdens on departmental editors. If you wish to be considered as an *ad hoc* reviewer of JIBS please contact the departmental editor closest to your research interests.

One other important change relates to the new role and structure of the JIBS Consulting Editors Board. This board has two major roles. The first is advisory to the Editor in Chief on any issue relating to JIBS. In particular, I am sensitive to being aware of the unique history of the journal and to maintaining continuity of JIBS editorial policies and traditions while simultaneously opening the

journal to new opportunities. The second is to serve as reviewers of last resort in case of serious disagreements between a departmental editor and an author. Such cases are very rare, but the wide scope and range of JIBS may involve a paper that is beyond the expertise of the Editor in Chief to handle, and therefore would benefit from a *de novo* review by a consulting editor.

The reality of academic publishing is that most peer-reviewed journals take on a passive role when it comes to exploring new research frontiers. In essence, journals depend on receiving path-breaking papers over the transom, fervently hoping not to reject the next Nobel prize-winning paper. If JIBS is to define international business studies research it needs to be proactive in exploring and legitimizing new arenas of international research. To this end JIBS, in collaboration with 17 centers for international business education and research (CIBERS) is launching a new annual conference. The first annual conference, on *Emerging Research Frontiers in International Business Studies*, will be held 6–9 March 2003 at Duke University. This high-profile event represents the official exploration arm of the JIBS. For details see www.JIBS.net. The aims of the conference are:

- To encourage the exploration of emerging research ideas in an innovative environment, free from the constraints of traditional conference formats;
- to facilitate open discourse;
- to legitimize the exploration of new research domains;
- to redirect or shut down outmoded themes;
- to build a community of international research scholars across both the social sciences and the functional areas of international business.

The invited conference participants represent a broad cross-section of international scholarship; they range from advanced doctoral students to senior faculty, as well as leading thinkers from the world of practice. At least half the participants each year will be new to the conference, to counteract lock-in and ensure the exploration of fresh ideas. The JIBS editorial team will attend each conference: the aim is to maximize their sensitivity and appreciation of emerging research themes.

Another goal of the conference is to explore and identify themes for future JIBS special issues. These emerging issues will be first explored in the annual conference on emerging research

frontiers in international business studies. If, in the judgment of the JIBS editors, the potential exists for a special issue, a group of guest editors will be appointed to oversee and guide the development of this issue. At least one of the guest editors must be an Associate Editor in Chief of the JIBS or a departmental editor. A key requirement is that the Call for Papers allow sufficient lead time to cast as wide a net as possible for new manuscripts to be developed and submitted for consideration. On occasion, however, the Editor in Chief will invite or solicit a focused issue in response to an unsolicited proposal or as an urgent initiative of the editors. In similar fashion the Editor in Chief will invite occasional 'perspective' papers that review, explore and frame an emerging research theme in international business or redirect prior research.

I am often asked what makes a good paper in JIBS. The following are a few thoughts on publishing in the journal. All top-tier peer-reviewed journals, including JIBS, seek to publish path-breaking original research that investigates significant research questions, is theoretically grounded with logically grounded hypotheses, uses appropriate data and state-of-the-art empirical methods, reports significant findings, and has useful implications for the world of practice. In reality most journals publish mid-range or minor theoretical papers and incremental empirical results that account for a small fraction of the variance. Perhaps not surprisingly, most papers published in academic journals sink without a trace. A small fraction of all papers published in peer-reviewed journals account for the lions share of all citations.

To greatly increase the impact of papers published in JIBS, high-quality papers need to have a clear statement of purpose and key findings that imply new and surprising insights about the phenomena under study. Such papers should also advance theory by specifying new and surprising causal linkages among variables, should be sufficiently general for future empirical investigations by others, and on occasion should shut down or start up new areas of inquiry. Of course, empirical papers should be grounded in an appropriate and concise literature review of the relevant themes, focusing on the discussion of core concepts that define the hypotheses to be investigated. All else being equal, the data should be adequate to the task, and the larger the sample the better. However, small, carefully focused samples are often valuable for testing clear uni-causal predictions. It is prudent to ensure

that the data set encompasses substantial variation for each core concept that is specified in the hypotheses, and that issues of data selection bias are anticipated and avoided. As no empirical data set will score a 'perfect 10' it is valuable to be up front in discussing the limitations of the data. It is also desirable to anticipate and control for likely alternative explanations. At the very least the paper needs to discuss why the proposed explanation is preferred to alternative possible explanations. For any journal, including JIBS, it is advantageous to select empirical methods that meet or, better yet, exceed the expectation of the journal. The discussion section is crucial for tying the paper together, drawing out implications of the individual results, advancing theory, and whenever possible discussing implications for management practice. Although statistical findings are easier to publish than qualitative case studies many journals including JIBS will publish high-quality qualitative research that tests or explores theory, develops new insights, and is not just another descriptive study.

The JIBS editorial policy is intended to be developmental. Editors and reviewers are committed first and foremost, to finding the 'jewel' in a paper and to guiding the author in developing this idea instead of looking for reasons to reject the paper.

A sad commentary on academic publishing is that most scholars are poor written communicators of their research. Whenever possible, it is best to seek feedback from colleagues, even if it means begging for such feedback. After revising the paper it is advisable to create a temporal distance from it before revising it one last time prior to submitting it for review. Departmental editors in JIBS are instructed to return papers to authors without review if, in their judgment, they do not meet the editorial objectives of the journal or if they are not sufficiently developed. In recognition of the challenge faced by most academics in writing coherent and accessible papers, JIBS is instituting a process of deep copy-editing of each accepted paper (with the approval of the author) and, when necessary, securing the services of professional editors to work with authors of accepted papers to make them maximally accessible.

Finally I wish to acknowledge the support of several partners and key individual that are sustaining JIBS and the many new initiatives for the next few years. These partners include the Fuqua School of Business, Duke University, the Rotterdam School

of Management, Erasmus University, the Copenhagen Business School, and 17 CIBERs (see journal and JIBS.net for listing) who are co-sponsoring JIBS and the new annual conference on emerging research frontiers in international business. In addition Danielle Trojan, the JIBS Managing Editor, and Lisa Bax Evans, the Managing Editor at Erasmus, deserve special recognition and thanks for their support, perseverance and countless

initiatives during the transition period. I also wish to acknowledge the unwavering support of the AIB Executive Committee for all the new JIBS initiatives undertaken at the start of my term as Editor in Chief. Last but not least I wish to ;note that, beginning with volume 34, JIBS is being published by Palgrave Macmillan, and that the frequency of publication has been changed to six issues per year for a total of 1000 pages per year.