EDITORIAL

Letter From the Editor

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Journal of International Business Studies
(2003) 34, 413–415. doi:10.1057/
palgrave.jibs.8400052

At the recently concluded annual AIB meeting in Monterey, California I reported to the membership on the status and ambition of JIBS under the new editorial team. The purpose of this letter is to share my presentation with the entire AIB community and readership of JIBS.

Peer reviewed academic management and social journals all share the goal of advancing their respective fields by seeking to publish path-breaking research on major questions. In reality, however, most journals (including top tier journals) publish midrange theories or minor theoretical extensions and incremental empirical findings. In the field of strategy management the variance explained by any one empirical study is inconsequential. This observation also holds true for empirical research in social psychology and organization behavior. Moreover, citations studies suggest that most published peer reviewed papers sink without a trace.

It would seem that publishing radical new ideas is an unnatural act for established journals. New ideas that lead to new research paradigms or that redirect established orthodoxy in a major way are rare and difficult to recognize or easily denied in the course of the peer review process. JIBS is not different from other established journals in this regard, as judged by its declining impact scores in recent years. In the case of JIBS another cause may be that ‘...the international business (IB) research agenda is running out of steam?’ as discussed by Peter Buckley (Buckley, 2002).

The new JIBS editorial team has implemented an editorial strategy and editorial structure that is designed to increase the odds of attracting to JIBS new emergent IB research ideas, new paradigms, and new research directions. In essence, the strategy is intended to open JIBS to much greater variety in IB research themes. The new decentralized editorial structure represents the first step towards increased variety. The nine editorial areas, each with two or more Departmental Editors (DEs) guiding the review and developmental process of papers, represents a formal structural solution for increasing the volume and variety of submissions to JIBS. Simply put, many gatekeepers and editorial areas that cross-disciplinary fields add up to greater variety. Greater variety arises from opening JIBS to scholars doing international research in adjacent fields and from opening up JIBS to a broader range of theories, disciplines, and empirical methods. The structure also provides greater flexibility for realigning or opening new editorial areas. For example, the Entrepreneurship area has been renamed Entrepreneurship and New Ventures; Political Economy, Public Policy and Political Science has been renamed International

Political Economy and Comparative Capitalism; and a new editorial area has been created for Technology and Innovation. Tom Murtha has been selected as DE for this new area, and the second DE for this important new area will be announced soon. I am also especially pleased to note that the new DEs for IPE/CC are Lorraine Eden from Texas A&M and Mary O'Sullivan from INSEAD. In total, JIBS has 22 DEs organized into nine editorial areas. Other changes include the addition of Professor Pankaj Ghemawat to the strategy Editorial area and Professor Raj Aggarwal to the Finance Economics Editorial area.

Most peer-reviewed journals are passive in their acquisition of papers. In other words, they wait for papers to be received over the transom and are limited to reviewing submissions as they arrive. Of course, special issues are designed to attract a collection of papers on a specific topic and thereby signal the journal's interest in a new theme. JIBS, is implementing a second and more proactive strategy for opening the journal to new ideas and for increasing variety. The strategy involves the new JIBS Annual Conference on Emerging Research Frontiers in International Business. The goals of this conference are to

- Encourage exploration of emerging research ideas in an innovative environment free from the straightjacket of reified IB definitions and traditional conference formats.
- Facilitate open discourse, redirect, or shut down exhausted themes.
- Increase awareness and appreciation of international topics outside of current mainstream research in IB studies.
- Build community of international scholars across the social sciences and functional areas of business.
- Explore and identify themes for future special issues of JIBS.

The first conference was held at The Fuqua School of Business, Duke University, March 6–9, 2003. The conference was cosponsored by the 18 Centers for International Business Education and Research (CIBERS) that support JIBS.

The conference was not convened to engage in discussions of whether it is true or not that the field of IB research has been stagnating, is out of steam or is stuck in a pre-paradigmatic stage, or whether its balance of intellectual trade with allied disciplines is in deficit or not. Although it would be wonderful to be omniscient and identify big,

audacious, all encompassing research themes in IB that serve to rally the IB community, create identity and keep the midnight oil burning on IB research, the reality of discovering and exploring new research directions is that such themes are more likely to *emerge*.

The annual JIBS Conference on Emerging Research Frontiers in IB is designed to encourage emergence of new ideas by structuring forms of interaction among diverse configurations of scholars who share interests in IB research broadly defined. The discussion processes focus on explorations of themes, theories, and empirical puzzles in an intellectually safe, non-egocentric, stimulating, and constructive environment.

The first conference explored a broad range of ideas and topics. Future conferences will focus on a more limited number of themes. It is probably much too soon to judge the success of the conference. Some IB scholars felt that conference explored ideas that were too far removed from core IB scholarship. Some felt that there was nothing-new added – just old wine in new bottles. The vast majority, however, commented on the energy and dynamism of the discussions and the new ideas or redirection of established orthodoxy that served to stimulate their thinking. I am pleased to note that JIBS editors are considering several potential themes that will be explored in 'Perspective' papers to appear in future issues of JIBS. These themes include, for example, Strategies for the Base of the Pyramid; Role of Specialized Intermediaries and their Absence when Entering a New Market; Global Markets that are not Fully Isolated nor Fully Integrated; Have Most 'Global' Firms Actually Followed a Regional Growth Strategy and Why? Social Movements, their Expression as NGOs, and their Impact on Country Institutional Configuration and on Firm Strategy; FDI, Unanticipated Spillovers, and Public Policy; and Cross-Cultural Differences in Thinking Probabilistically. The intent is that the discussion of these themes and others within JIBS will serve as a signal that JIBS is open to research in these areas and that through such openness let the definition of the field of IB to evolve and emerge.

The implementation of the strategy outlined above also required articulating a new editorial philosophy and a new manuscript processing system. The change in the new editorial philosophy is simple and straightforward. JIBS expects reviewers and DEs to first seek the jewel in a paper

(instead of finding reasons to reject paper) and then guide author to develop and bring out that jewel. It is also clear that a strategy that aims to open JIBS to new ideas requires brave editors willing to stake their individual reputations on developing such ideas and accepting them for publication in JIBS.

JIBS is committed to giving authors fast, constructive, developmental reviews. Specifically, JIBS aims to communicate the first stage editorial decision in 3 months or less. Achieving this goal will place JIBS in the ranks of very few journals that at present meet such review standards, and ahead of most journals JIBS compares itself to. At this time, however, the reality falls far from this goal. The reasons are many, and three causes stand out. Firstly, we have experienced implementation problems with the new JIBS on-line manuscript processing system. Secondly, we have encountered a surprisingly large number of *ad-hoc* and author nominated reviewers who decline to review for JIBS. Please recall that each paper is normally reviewed by three referees (one from ERB, one *ad-hoc* and one from four nominations by author). Thirdly, certain editorial areas are receiving a disproportionate number of submissions necessitating a realignment of DEs and an increase in the number of reviewers on the ERB.

I wish to make it clear that my immediate top priority is to overcome the delay in processing

manuscripts and to provide JIBS authors timely, fair, and constructive reviews. We have instituted many changes to our procedures that should expedite delayed reviews and provide timely reviews on new submissions. The changes include fixes to the on-line system, expansion of ERB, decreased reliance on *ad-hoc* reviewers, and when feasible DEs have been empowered to make editorial decision on basis of two reviews. The impact of these changes and others should become visible over the near term. Nevertheless, if any author is dissatisfied with her or his experience with JIBS please feel free to write to me directly at aylewin@attglobal.net the buck for any matter that involves JIBS stops at my desk.

In closing, I would like to remind all of us that the identity of JIBS is rooted in the history and identity of the Academy of International Business. The new editorial team aspires to nurture and deepen this identity. The ambition of JIBS is to become a recognized top tier journal, acclaimed for redirecting International Business research and for defining new directions. Achieving these two goals will require persistence of purpose, time, patience, and of course some luck. The outcome of achieving a renewed identity and recognized top tier status for JIBS can only enhance the status of our entire AIB community.