The Reputation Community

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We are delighted to welcome you to this special (double) issue celebrating the 20th anniversary of our *Corporate Reputation Review* (CRR)! The birth of the journal is closely tied to the founding of the Reputation Institute (RI) in 1997 by Charles Fombrun and Cees van Riel. The papers included in the inaugural issue were edited versions of presentations made at the first conference RI organized in New York in May 1997. Those papers illustrated the broad scope and relevance of reputation research, and ranged from conceptual reflections on measurement and financial valuation to explorations of the psychological and sociological processes associated with reputation-building; and from corporate marketing to crisis management. The editorial article that introduced the first issue, “The Reputational Landscape,” written by Charles Fombrun and Cees van Riel, quickly became a classic. It pointed to the richness of ‘reputation’ as a field of study—a construct they showed was inherently interdisciplinary and demanded new ways of bridging theories drawn from the fields of strategy, organization, economics, sociology, and psychology. In doing so, that groundbreaking editorial pointed to the need for a new and vibrant collaborative platform for academics from a wide variety of disciplines—and our ‘reputation community’ was born.

RI’s annual conference and the quarterly publication of CRR owe a great deal to the personal commitment and connections Charles and Cees developed and

institutionalized. These two forums brought together not only a diversity of academics, but also a range of committed practitioners involved in active management of corporate reputations. Over the years, the conference was held in a wide range of locations, such as Puerto Rico, China, Brazil, the US, the UK, the Netherlands, Denmark, France, Spain, and Norway, which also opened up opportunities to develop a mutual understanding between different cultures. Furthermore, the conference’s doctoral consortium, which was held for 15 consecutive years, helped junior scholars interested in the field to develop and grow, and to submit excellent work on reputation to academic journals. It remains a tribute to their acumen and vision that Charles and Cees succeeded in establishing a global reputation community of research and practice, one committed to deepening our understanding and analysis of corporate reputations, as well as the development of our understanding of the reputations of other entities like cities, countries, industries, and regions. Thanks to active dialogue and global cooperation among passionate researchers and practitioners, numerous research projects were conducted over the past 20 years, some of which have been published in CRR, and many of which have also influenced practice. The reputation community has also produced very real friendships that have withstood the test of time.

To celebrate the 20th anniversary of CRR, we asked many of those who attended the initial conference, as well as several other members of our community, to share some thoughts about the reputation community and the impact it has had on their personal journey, their work, and on the field. We also invited them to comment on the future. We are pleased that a large number answered our call and they are included in this special issue.

Referring to the early annual RI conferences, and especially to the first conference in New York, *David*

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Deephouse (who has been closely involved with the conferences from the beginning, especially with the doctoral consortium) speaks of an “event that changed my life,” which formed the basis for friendships that still exist today. *Suzanne Carter* is among them—and she writes of the influence it had on her life and on her research and teaching, emphasizing the connection between reputation and creating shared value. The same holds for *Craig Carroll*, who also recounts how a chance meeting with an executive at the conference in Puerto Rico led to a long-lasting relationship that also brought home the importance of corporate reputation for him. *Majken Schultz* also comments on those early days and how she came to join the reputation community. Like some of the other contributors, she notes how valuable it was for the community to push forward the measurement of reputation and its ability to impact concrete outcomes for companies, institutions, cities, and countries. *Gary Davies* highlights the view that reputations involve managing support both internally with employees as well as externally with customers—with enhanced financial performance as the outcome. *Leslie Gaines-Ross* stresses the practical benefits created by the community’s commitment to developing tangible measures of reputation. It has given added credibility and legitimacy to practitioners and to a field that has long been viewed as “an art form.”

We also asked contributors to this special issue to reflect on current trends in reputation research. *Naomi Gardberg* provides evidence that reputation research does not seem to be a fad or a fading fashion, providing confidence in the viability of our field. *Violina Rindova* emphasizes the multidimensional nature of the reputation construct and its implications for future research. *Bill Newbury* points to the growing importance of multilevel research for reputation management. *Klement Podnar* and *Urša Golob* step back to reflect on the continued need to distinguish better between the reputation, image, and identity constructs, and propose a framework derived from ecology for conceiving those distinctions.

Taking a broader perspective, *Kevin Money* and *Carola Hillenbrand*, early members of the community, joined forces with younger reputation scholars *Anastasiya Sar-aeva*, *Irene Garnelo-Gomez*, and *Stephen Pain* to propose a broad framework for future reputation research, including

different types of mechanism and outcome variables. *Irv Schenkler* adds his thoughts about how societal issues and corporate messaging have been intertwined from 1997 to 2017. *Pavel Kim* reports how reputation research and consulting have changed the corporate landscape in Russia. We end this special issue with a cautionary note from *Klaus-Peter Wiedmann* who, though he remains quite positive about the future adoption of reputation management approaches, also identifies various challenges managers have faced in implementing a disciplined approach to reputation management in Germany.

Because we could not invite everyone who provided valuable contributions to the journal and our community over the years, we would like to take this opportunity to offer our profound thanks to all of you who have submitted papers to CRR, presented papers or engaged in discussions at the conference, acted as reviewers, and contributed in many other ways. Thank you all for establishing and maintaining this excellent community of academics and practitioners!

We would like to conclude by wishing a Happy Anniversary to CRR, to the dedicated members of our editorial board, and to all members of the Reputation Community!

Guido Berens, editor-in-chief.

Klaus-Peter Wiedmann, guest editor 20th anniversary issue.

Acknowledgement We would like to thank Charles Fombrun and Cees van Riel for their helpful comments and suggestions.

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