



Editorial: The new Xjenza Online

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Editor-in-Chief of Xjenza online

Last June I was offered the position of Editor-in-Chief of Xjenza, the official Journal of the Malta Chamber of Scientists (ChoSci) by the acting President, Prof Alex Felice. The journal's production has been interrupted since 2007 and now the Chamber, revitalised by a new spring, wanted to publish it again and cover the gap left in the scientific Maltese community, this time as an online only journal. I was excited by this challenge and very grateful for the confidence expressed in me by the ChoSci council in recognition of my extensive international editorial experience. I would like to take this opportunity to share with the membership my general vision and plans for the journal as we move forward in this new beginning and publish the first issue.

First, I would thank the previous editorial team, who, we believe, did an excellent job in advancing the breadth and appeal of Xjenza. Under the leadership of Prof Giuseppe Grima and Prof Richard Muscat, the journal continues as the premier outlet for work carried out in Malta. Further, their efforts to increase the readability of the journal are highly admirable and I plan to continue, and hope to expand upon, these efforts. Indeed, I will build upon their efforts in the hope of making a great journal even better.

Generally, I will continue the vision for the journal as established by the founding Editor Prof Xuereb and pursued by his predecessors, but we aim higher by taking it to an international level. I will strive to publish national and international scholarly research that is of exceptional merit, that focuses on important issues from different branches of science, technology and the humanities, is of general interest, and understandable to as many scholars as possible. As with the ChoSci I am also intent on NOT creating a journal which is a collection of niches: my intent is to create synergies, not fiefdoms. More specifically, together with my new appointed editorial team I plan to pursue four major goals regarding the new Xjenza, to:

1. Increase the diversity and quality of submissions and

open the journal to international authors;

2. Encourage and publish student papers (both reviews and research articles)

3. Advertise local and international opportunities for research collaborations, grants, meetings and successful stories

4. Improve the production process and decrease the time required for reviewing manuscripts.

Our aim to increase the diversity and quality of submissions via broad and systematic outreach can only be addressed by a more deliberate and systematic outreach plan, and by improving communication with the membership of different professions. Although we certainly applaud previous efforts to specifically invite high quality submissions, we believe that much more can be done. Significant and important high standard work, for instance, is being presented at the national and international conferences of many area studies associations by Maltese colleagues. Reaching out to these scholars, and others employing underrepresented approaches, should stimulate more submissions to the journal. We believe that it is important to broaden the appeal of Xjenza by engaging well recognised scientists. We believe that the problem of submissions to Xjenza is rooted in a perception held by many in the profession that Xjenza is only "for local related issues." We do not intend to dissociate the journal from the Maltese reality, which would be a great loss. Instead, continuing the tradition there will be a session of Xjenza dedicated to News and Notes where information on grant opportunities (locally and internationally) on related to Maltese achievements and recognition can be found. We hope that Xjenza Online will take back its role of forum for academic discussion. At the same time we want to start the internationalisation of this journal, opening it up to researchers worldwide. Our goal is to take Xjenza among the other international journals, we hope with the help of affirmed publishing houses, amongst whom we have already started preliminary contacts.

We have already engaged in a systematic outreach effort which involved, first, communication with the organized sections of the ChoSci to ask for input on suggested names for the Xjenja's editorial board (and we intend to continue to ask for input and advice); and second, to attend, in person, as many national and international conferences as possible to speak to scientists about our journal.

The new and important aim of Xjenja Online, besides highlighting the exciting research being done nationally and internationally, is to offer training in the art of scientific publishing in a peer-reviewed environment for graduate students and young researchers. Indeed, publication of research work is essential in order to advance science. It is also essential for people pursuing a scientific career as their recognition as researchers depends on their publications and contributions to scientific progress. Scientists live in a culture of "publish or perish". Xjenja Online, therefore, can become an essential tool in the scientific development of early-stage researchers, and represent a learning platform where they can learn not only how to write a scientific paper, but also how to get it published. In this important task we will be assisted by the students' supervisors that will guide them in the writing process. In this first number of Xjenja Online there is a section dedicated to student papers. Mr Cassar, under the guidance of Prof Hunter, produced an interesting review on Serpines and Luana Chetcuti Zammit, supervised by Dr Kenneth, presented a research article on computational models to study air Pollution in Malta. We hope to see more and more papers signed by students.

To improve the production process as in the first issue, we are committed to the practice of collective decision making, where the members of the editorial team consult with one another before the final acceptance of manuscripts. The Xjenja's team is made up of six editors so far, a small team, in alphabetical order, Sebastiano D'Amico (Geosciences), Sandro Lanfranco (Life Science), David Magri (Physics and Chemical Science), Kenneth Scerri (Mathematics, Communications and Informatics Science), Victoria Sultana (Human Interest Science), Mario Valentino (Biomedical Sciences). In ad-

dition there is the Copy Editor Jackson Levi Said as well as a web administrator John Gabarretta, and we aim to involve in the next future Post Doctoral Assistants and graduate student Editorial Assistants.

We have started the practice of having multiple editors with varied perspectives and methodological skills. In addition, I plan to include an Advisory Board made of international scholars.

As far as the editorial process is concerned, as lead editor, I will scan each new submission carefully but quickly and will direct it to the most appropriate Associate Editor. I believe the process is most efficient where one person (preferably with expertise in the sub-field) is responsible for overseeing the review process of a manuscript. The responsible associate editor will then assign the referees, consulting with the lead editor or members of the Editorial Board in cases that are difficult and/or outside the editor's area of expertise. If a submission falls into an area which we do not feel competent to handle, we will seek the advice of an appropriate member of the Board for recommendations for referees. Indeed, we will regard it as one of the most important functions of the Advisory Board to lend their expertise in areas where we lack intimate knowledge. The result, we hope, will be a fair hearing for every manuscript from every area of science, technology and the humanities.

We believe that we will be able to maintain a high degree of continuity in our team. All members of the team are established and committed senior faculty in our University. Finally, we are keenly aware of the enormous responsibility we are taking on, and have no illusions about the amount of hard work required. I am, however, eager to meet this challenge, and am extremely grateful for the support and confidence expressed in our editorial team by the ChoSci Council on behalf of its members. We will do our utmost to live up to this responsibility. We welcome any comments or suggestions by our colleagues from the different disciplines-we are very open to any input and advice as to how to make Xjenja online better.

Thank you all for this opportunity to serve the Chamber, colleagues and our wonderful Island. We will not let you down.