



*Special Editorial*

## 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Xjenza (July 1996–July 2016), the official Journal of the Malta Chamber of Scientists

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It was twenty years ago today that the Malta Chamber of Scientists published the first issue of Xjenza. At one of its meetings, some sixteen months prior to the first issue in July 1996, a member of the Chamber of Scientists put forward the idea of starting a scientific journal. After much discussion, the idea was approved by a majority. It was not a unanimous decision, however. Some members even felt that Xjenza would cease to publish after the first few issues. How wrong they were! Twenty years later and Xjenza is still going strong, thanks to the hard work of its current Editor-in-Chief Professor Giuseppe Di Giovanni, and other Editors Prof. Richard Muscat and Prof. Joseph N. Grima who kept the journal going between 2002 and 2007.

With much encouragement, I opted to serve as Editor-in-Chief, with four Associate Editors to assist me in what seemed a mammoth task at the time, namely: Dr. Martin Ebejer, Professor Richard Muscat, Professor Christian Scerri and Professor Emmanuel Sinagra.

The Editorial Policy established the setting up of high standards of peer review, which would have automatically led to equally high standards of scientific research. However, the editorial policy at the time was not to solely publish research work by established scientists but also to encourage young scientists, be they undergraduate or postgraduate students, with promising new areas of research to write papers and submit them for publication. Xjenza was to provide a suitable training ground for these young scientists seeking their first publication.

The Editorial Board was keen to publish original research articles. Review articles on topical issues were to be encouraged. It was also the intention of the Editorial Board to establish visible research profiles to increase awareness among members of the Chamber and the general public of the scientific research being conducted in



Angela A. Xuereb Anastasi, Editor of Xjenza, 1996–2002

Malta at the time in the various disciplines.

Xjenza was meant to be a record of Maltese scientific development and achievement, and also a forum for the initiation and development of debate on the major specific scientific issues of the day.

Importantly, we also envisaged Xjenza as a means by which links could be forged with local scientists and Maltese scientists working abroad. The idea was for a register to be compiled with a view to familiarizing local colleagues with their work and encouraging cross-border Maltese collaboration.

Twenty years ago, University science in Malta was in need of much nurturing, still in its infancy. Most of us had passed long periods of time abroad working towards a doctoral degree or on postdoctoral fellowships conducting research at various universities and research institutes mostly in the UK and USA. There were some

members of the Chamber of Scientists putting in a lot of energy to improve the visibility of science in Malta. There was a vibrant atmosphere, with most trying to set up research laboratories and to publish in international peer-reviewed journals to put the University of Malta on the map. And that is what spurred us on to start Xjenza.

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The journal's production was interrupted between 2007–2012 and the Chamber, revitalised by a new spring, wanted to publish it again and fill the gap left in the scientific Maltese community, this time as an online only journal. I was excited to take the challenge of leading Xjenza and very grateful for the confidence expressed in me by the ChoSci council in recognition of my extensive international editorial experience.

Generally, I have continued the vision for the journal as established by the founding Editor Prof Xuereb and pursued by her successors, but I aimed higher by taking Xjenza to an international level. I have strived to publish national and international scholarly research, which focuses on important issues from different branches of science, technology and the humanities, of general interest, and understandable to as many scholars as possible.

More specifically, together with my new appointed editorial team I feel confident to affirm that we have pursued four major goals regarding the new Xjenza Online, 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 (news articles);
4. improve the production process and decrease the time required for reviewing manuscripts.

We have broadened the appeal of Xjenza by engaging well recognized scientists. Xjenza Online has taken back its role of forum for academic discussion. At the same time we have started the internationalisation of this journal, opening it up to researchers worldwide. Our goal is to create a place for Xjenza among the other international journals. We have now enough issues (7), high-quality papers and a strong editorial board to apply to have Xjenza indexed in the major databases, such as MEDLINE, THOMSON REUTERS SCIENTIFIC.

We have continued the old and important aim of Xjenza Online, besides highlighting the exciting research being done nationally and internationally, 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”. Xjenza Online, therefore, has become an essential tool in the scientific development of early-stage researchers, and represents a learning platform where they can learn not only how to write a scientific paper, but also how to get it published.

As mentioned in diverse parts of this Editorial, our work as Editors would not be possible without the tireless support and contributions from our Associate Editors, Members of the Editorial Board, and our production staff. Special thanks go to our Associate Editors who are instrumental in helping us assess submissions, and communicate often several times per week with the Editors and Managing Editor. They are as much a part of the Xjenza team as the Editor-in-Chief. The Xjenza's team is made up of eleven editors, Ian Thornton (Cognitive and Social Sciences), Ian Cassar (Economics) Sebastiano D'Amico (Geosciences), David Mifsud (Life Science), David Magri (Physics and Chemical Science), Philip Farrugia (Engineering Science), Liberato Camilleri (Mathematical and Statistical Science), Nicholas Sammut (Information and Communication Technologies), Carmel Cefai (Psychological Science), Godfrey Baldacchino (Social Sciences), Joseph Galea (Medical Sciences). In addition there is the Project Editor Jackson Said, Copy Editor Gabriel Farrugia and the Editorial Assistant Caitlin Davies.

In addition, I have included an Advisory Board made of international scholars, such as Prof. David Eisner, Manchester University, UK, Prof. Vincenzo Crunelli, Cardiff University, UK; Prof. Angela A. Xuereb Anastasi, University of Malta; Prof. Frank Vella, University of Saskatchewan, Canada; Prof. Giacomo Rizzolatti, University of Parma, Italy. Moreover, we have also add some Editorial Board Members (Dr Maurizio Casarrubea from the University of Palermo, Italy, Dr Katya De Giovanni from the University of Malta, Malta, Prof. Maria Attard from the University of Malta, Malta, Prof. Mauro Pessia from the University of Malta, Malta and Dr Sandro Lanfranco from the University of Malta, Malta who served as an AE from 2013–2015).

## Xjenza Online New Look

A principle well known in the world of communication is that for material to be seen as trustworthy and fresh, the manner in which a topic is presented is as important as the content itself. Therefore, it is important to assess regularly the “look” and image of the journal with the goal of improving our ability to communicate with our

readers. An important example of this improvement is seen in this new edition of *Xjenza Online*, where we introduce several new features. The most visible is our front cover, where we have a new logo and a new design. We hope our readers find this new look fresh and exciting, and that it helps brand *Xjenza Online* as the Maltese leader in science publishing.

As we look toward the future, Xjenza Online will continue to strive to improve content, expand distribution and access, and improve functionality for our readers and all others interested in the recent development in the different branches of science in Malta and abroad.

In the coming months, we would like to start a new annual Xjenza prize for the best research paper published in the previous calendar year. We will also be looking at ways to improve the synergy between, and the ChoSci website, with an eye toward creating a strong portfolio of content for the Xjenza international community. As we identify ways to improve the Journal, if you have comments or suggestions, we as Editors would like to hear from you. Thank you for our 20 years, and we look forward to year 30 and beyond.

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Giuseppe Di Giovanni, Editor of Xjenza, 2013–Present