

Ten Years of Ecozon@: Reflections from the First Managing Editors

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Ecozon@ was gestated in the spring of 2007 in Extremadura, in the imposing Monfragüe national park, home to 280 species of the most significant animals of Spain, many of them in danger of extinction. Not a bad place for a journal devoted to the study of literature, culture, and nature to start its life. The journal's proud parents had been mulling over the idea for quite some time, but the responsibility of bringing a new publication into the world made them cautious. Monfragüe had been the chosen venue for the first GIECO seminar, and it gave the group the opportunity to experience how well we could work together. This realisation, and the step forward taken by two midwives—although we, that is, Imelda and Margarita, prefer to see ourselves as fairy godmothers—provided the necessary enthusiasm to take the plunge. When the seminar was over, the group already had an idea for the structure of the journal, and even a name, which Nacho Oliva had suggested just before (or was it shortly after?) the group took its farewell photo in a field of olive trees, which provided the inspiration for the GIECO logo. *Ecozon@* was in motion, and the progeny was presented in October 2008, in the course of the 3rd EASLCE Biennial Conference, held at the University of Alcalá.

Beginnings are usually hard, but fortunately they often go hand in hand with extraordinary enthusiasm. And if you are lucky to share the task of managing the edition of a journal with a friend, then the going is less tough. Our enthusiasm and hard work habits allowed us to establish a routine and to assign tasks effectively, despite the geographical distance that separated, but never divided, the whole editorial team. Although Carmen Flys immediately accepted the leadership and managed to coordinate the setting up process, as well as the painstaking task of soliciting funding from the Franklin Institute (UAH), which has always enthusiastically supported our research group's projects, the rest of the team supervised every decision that was taken along the path, sometimes accepting a particular choice, many others introducing alternatives or asking for changes. Unforgettable for us will always remain the moment EASLCE awarded support to the journal, or when Axel Goodbody was recruited as the balancing figure, associate editor, in charge of the editorial for the General Section of each new issue, and to provide a much appreciated thorough final review to the articles. From its very beginning, *Ecozon@* has remained an international journal, starting with its original editorial team and its acceptance of articles written in five languages. We certainly had trouble setting up, but struggled to understand the world of computing and programming

to a certain extent, devoting extra hours with the only satisfaction of looking ahead, envisioning a future success for our publication.

Editing and organizing the first issue constituted a challenge, since at that time we lacked knowledge of the management of academic journals. Instead of becoming a drawback, we found inspiration in our own mistakes and laughed at our ignorance on how to find solutions to fix computing problems. Essays started to arrive while we were still trying to improve our performance, and we were forced to face new complications related to task distribution and reassignment of responsibilities. Irene Sanz became our most faithful support and the bridge with Carmen Flys. It was not rare to receive messages from her stating that “Carmen is on fire,” when a certain document had not been edited correctly, although the atmosphere has always remained friendly, and our relationship has certainly been strengthened by this experience of many years focused on the same purpose: publishing a quality academic journal.

Most of the renowned scholars we approached to submit their essays for the inaugural issue showed immediate interest and provided very useful information for improvement as well as encouragement and technical support, embarking themselves in the design and managing of the journal itself besides contributing with their essays “crafted” for the special occasion. Satisfied as we are today with the results of that first issue, the feeling back then was more of uncertainty, fearing the response of the authorised voices in the academic world even though we had nurtured the creature with our best zeal. The reception of that first issue resulted in the confirmation that we had definitely covered an important niche in the ecocritical world and that our contribution would make a difference among the respected publications devoted to the study of literature, culture and the environment.

We originally started by sharing the tasks of editorial management yearly, but that initial organisation was short lived, since the distribution soon took a more organic tinge, in a way that suited our respective work commitments as well as our biorhythms, with Imelda taking charge of the Spring issues and Margarita of the Autumn ones, a schedule that we kept all the years we worked together as managing editors. Looking for new challenges and full of other academic responsibilities, Margarita and Imelda decided it was about time to step down and allow new hands to take care of the managing process of the, by then, no longer an infant but a child growing fast. Thankfully, Diana Villanueva took over after the EASLCE conference in Tartu and Imelda stayed editing with her for a little longer to help her feel confident and reassured in doing a job that Diana now shares with Lorraine Kerslake.

This issue commemorates a decade of *Ecozon@* and emulates the inaugural one with commissioned essays of renowned scholars. For us, as managing editors, this translates into ten years of thousands of emails, telephone conversations, checks, double checks, and, above all, insightful, rigorous, and challenging academic work. Taking up the position of managing editors implied long hours of hard work, but it was tremendously

rewarding, and not just at the intellectual level. Members of the editorial team working on the second issue of 2011 (“Ecospirit: Religion and Environment”) were the happy recipients of a magnificent box of Belgian chocolates from Franca Bellarsi, as a token of gratitude for the effort put into the longest issue at that moment, which Franca guest edited, and to wish us all a very Merry Christmas. Who said that editing a journal did not have its sweet, worldly rewards?

The whole *Ecozon@* editorial team was looking forward to presenting this tenth-anniversary issue in Granada, at the 9th Biennial EASLCE Conference, but Covid-19 has changed all that. Although the issue will still be published in the autumn of 2020, the conference, however, has been postponed till that of 2021, just as *Ecozon@* will turn into a pre-adolescent. It will still be too young to toast with a glass of champagne, but EASLCE members attending the conference will have the opportunity to raise their glasses to the journal’s long and healthy life. Till then, we can still do so from the comforts of our homes and the glare of our screens. Happy birthday, *Ecozon@*, and many happy returns of the day!



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