

On Our Editorial Process

MANAGING EDITOR'S NOTE

This is the inaugural edition of the Leeds Journal of Law & Criminology. Producing this edition has taken over a year. It is a long time, but we started from scratch. I hope that, by building upon the foundations we have set this year and what we have learned, the next team will find further success.

The way the journal was organised this year was probably good for a start-up, but one which is likely not to be used in future editions. After receiving 13 papers from our initial call, we set up a decentralised system where teams of two reviewers would read and review a paper in accordance with our established guidelines and based on their training in the peer-review process. We then asked reviewers to find members of academic staff to 'review the review', checking the paper for legal accuracy and the student review for objectivity and constructive criticism.

Only then would the paper be brought forward to be considered by the whole committee of reviewers, made up of everyone reviewing a paper. This decentralisation both took too long and meant that the Executive Committee had a more difficult time keeping up with where a submission was in the process. Even more unfortunately, because reviewers were only tenuously connected to the whole, a lot of work did not initially get done on time or to standard. A process designed to make things easier on the Executive ended up making a lot more work for us! We are thus grateful to people like Stanley Cheng, who had to be somewhat forcibly recruited as an editor but graciously assisted wherever he was needed. Jonathan Mohajer did all the layout work, mostly out of the goodness of his heart.

This decentralised process did, however, produce the somewhat

strange result that two of our five articles were penned by members of the Executive Committee. I would like to make it clear that as Managing Editor, I always ensured the authors were treated as was anyone else making a submission. They were excluded from decisions on whether or not to proceed with their paper. In fact, as I am sure they can attest, their work ended up being subjected to a very rigorous standard of editing because they had occasion to run into me on a regular basis.

We were fortunate to have the writings of Rosalee Dorfman and Jake Rylatt because something else we learned was that papers originally submitted as university assignments – the case with all our submissions this year – do not always make for great journal articles. Our authors were constantly hearing what basically became a mantra: ‘more argumentation, less description’. With the academic year in full swing, unfortunately some talented authors lacked the time necessary to add the clear stances and assessments of potential reform which make for interesting articles. We appreciate very much those who stuck with us and we hope they would agree their articles have improved as a result. I am sure that with advice from us the next Executive Committee will approach the task differently, particularly organisationally. We have hired three promising and highly recommended candidates to staff the reorganised positions of Editor-in-Chief, Managing Editor and Articles Editor. From there it is hoped they hire a committed Editorial Board made up of students who will work closely with the Executive to produce the next edition. We hope that some editors will go on to form the next Executive Committee, and that the Leeds Journal of Law & Criminology will continue to publish many more editions and become an important institution within the University of Leeds School of Law.

Christopher Ferguson
Managing Editor