

*From the Editors*

## Reflections on the Past Five Years and Other Matters

With this issue I conclude my five-year term as Editor in Chief of *Business Ethics Quarterly*. Over the last five years I have been privileged to work with an outstanding team of editors and a terrific editorial review board. Indeed, the editorial review board has grown to include 85 of the most distinguished business ethics and corporate responsibility scholars in the world, representing universities in nine different nations. The volume of new submissions to the journal is up significantly and now averages 300+ per year. The geographical diversity of submitting authors is also remarkable. With the journal's change of manuscript management systems to ScholarOne in early 2015 we are now able to track the nations from which submissions come. Since early 2015, BEQ has received submissions from 47 different nations with 77% originating from outside the United States. BEQ is truly an international journal serving an international community of scholars.

The types of submissions we receive can also be readily tracked in ScholarOne. While more finely-grained data are available, the most basic division is between empirical submissions and theory-only submissions. Here, the data show that since early 2015 empirical manuscripts comprised 52% of submissions and theory-only manuscripts comprised 48% of manuscripts. With respect to these manuscripts, 100% of the articles submitted to BEQ during my tenure as Editor were externally peer reviewed by between two and four referees (if they were not first desk rejected upon initial review). The acceptance rate during this period remained constant at approximately 5%. At BEQ we simultaneously provide a rigorous external peer review process while also maintaining an editorial approach that is developmental, enabling authors to expand and refine their ideas into original, impactful theoretical contributions. I am pleased to have published the outstanding scholarship produced by our authors with the able and conscientious assistance of our reviewers and BEQ's world class associate editors.

The most significant challenge in editing BEQ over the last five years was a change in publishers. The selection process, led by the Society for Business Ethics Board of Directors (of which the BEQ Editor is a member), involved an extended vetting and bidding process that resulted in the selection of Cambridge University Press as BEQ's new publisher. Once the contract was negotiated and signed, there was a two-year transition process involving the redesign of the appearance of the journal, the development and deployment of an extensive marketing plan, the archiving and online presentation of back issues, the creation of a new, comprehensive web presence, and the implementation of BEQ's customized Scholar One online manuscript management system. All of this took place while the normal submission and review processes of the journal continued as usual.

During this process Managing Editor Elizabeth Scott played an indispensable supporting role, especially with respect to the implementation of ScholarOne. It was Libby's job to simultaneously manage Editorial Express, which was used to manage manuscripts already submitted, and ScholarOne, which was used for all new submissions from early 2015 forward. Indeed, the BEQ leadership team as a whole is to be credited for their patience and good will as they utilized two manuscript management systems for the past 18 months. The transition to Cambridge is complete and BEQ authors are now reaching a broader audience via over 2,400 institutional subscribers. The journal is also producing substantially greater revenue for the Society for Business Ethics as a direct result of the change in publishers.

### THE *FINANCIAL TIMES* LIST

As many BEQ readers and authors may know, the *Financial Times* recently updated the list of journals that it uses to determine its research rank in its global MBA, EMBA and online MBA rankings. Many administrators use this list as an index of the quality of journals, but, interestingly, the *Financial Times* had recently made it clear that the list is *not* intended to be a measure of journal quality or prestige. Instead, the FT list is an inventory of journals that publish the most articles by faculty at institutions in the FT business school rankings. In an email to business school administrators, Laurent Ortman, FT Business Education Statistician, wrote that the list is an effort "to 'capture' as much of the research published by business school faculty as possible in leading journals, if not necessarily in the most selective ones." The FT list, said Ortman, "was never meant to demote nor to promote any journals. The FT list of journals is not a ranking."

What the FT has made plain is that objective quality measures, such as the journal's selectivity (e.g., its acceptance rate), whether or not its articles are externally peer reviewed, and the quality of its review and revision process, are not what determine whether journals make the list. What appears to matter most to the FT list compilers is the volume of articles published in the journal by faculty at business schools. Viewed in this light, it makes sense that a highly selective, quarterly journal such as BEQ, one that publishes a relatively small volume of submissions compared to other journals (especially those published by for-profit presses), would not be included on the list. What remains problematic, however, is the use by administrators of a list that is not intended as a measure of journal quality as the basis for judgments about the prestige of publication outlets. It is hard to justify such a practice ethically, even if it is pragmatically useful in positioning a program on one of the FT lists.

### AWARDS

One of my favorite responsibilities as Editor is presenting *Business Ethics Quarterly's* annual awards at the Society for Business Ethics annual meeting. This past August in Anaheim, California, the 2016 BEQ Best Referee and Best Article

Awards were presented. The journal cannot function without the support of our excellent editorial review board and each year we are pleased to acknowledge an editorial board member who has made an especially strong contribution to the mission of the journal by completing a large number of high quality and timely reviews. The 2016 Best Referee Award winner was awarded to Ben Wempe of Erasmus University.

This year's selection committee for the Best Article Award was comprised of committee chair Bruce Barry (Vanderbilt University) and committee members Tom Donaldson (University of Pennsylvania), and Guido Palazzo (University of Lausanne). The committee selected three finalists from articles nominated by the BEQ leadership team and then selected a winner from among those articles. Jennifer Goodman and Daniel Arenas were finalists for their article "Engaging Ethically: A Discourse Ethics Perspective on Social Shareholder Engagement" (2015). The committee found this article to be a conceptually sophisticated analysis of an important and surprisingly neglected aspect of stakeholder theory, namely, giving a voice to marginalized stakeholders. The article makes a compelling case for using discourse ethics as a normative lens for analyzing social shareholder engagement on behalf of marginalized stakeholders. Also finalists were Danielle Warren, Marietta Peytcheva and Joseph Gaspar for "When Ethical Tones at the Top Conflict: Adapting Priority Rules to Reconcile Conflicting Tones" (2015). The premise of this article is that scholars and practitioners routinely talk about corporate cultures as ethical or unethical, but what precisely is meant by the "tone at the top" has not been subjected to rigorous theoretical scrutiny. This article takes seriously the idea that we need a better and more rigorous understanding of what exactly is meant by an "ethical tone at the top." The article recognizes and reconciles conflicting ethical tones and influences in a theoretically insightful way that encourages future empirical study of the subject.

The 2016 winner of the BEQ Best Article award was James Dempsey for his article "Moral Responsibility, Shared Values, and Corporate Culture" (2015). Dempsey offers an account of culture that is framed by shared values, and uses that perspective to analyze the generation and distribution of moral responsibility in the firm. The committee found the arguments to be well crafted, well developed, elegant, and richly deserving of this year's best article award.

## TRANSITIONS

Finally, I am pleased to be handing over the reigns of BEQ to incoming Editor in Chief Bruce Barry. Bruce has served as an Associate Editor for BEQ since 2009 and he served a stint as Senior Associate Editor responsible for the initial review of all empirical submissions since early 2016. During the last six months of my term as Editor, I worked closely with Bruce to ensure a smooth transition and to ensure that he had the knowledge base needed to take on his new responsibilities. Producing BEQ is very much a team effort, motivated by the desire to ensure a world class scholarly outlet for business ethics scholarship, and it is in that spirit that the current BEQ leadership team will stay on with Bruce as editor. For my part,

I will stay on as the new Senior Associate Editor, with specific responsibility for theory-only submissions. While Bruce will no doubt put his own unique stamp on the journal, BEQ is thriving and will continue to do so under the leadership of our new Editor in Chief.

Denis G. Arnold  
Editor in Chief

#### REFERENCES

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