Editing *Alter*nation: A Fifteen Year Retrospective

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Abstract

*Alter*nation was established as an interdisciplinary journal in the Arts and Humanities in 1994. Fifteen years on, this article provides a brief timeline of the thirty-three book-length issues published, *Alter*nation's discursive themes, the managing, refereeing and administrative systems with a special focus on the guest-editing system, and the journal's website. In conclusion, the article closes with a few remarks on four incentives by the Academy of Science of South Africa in pursuit of the further development of the research systems in South Africa.

Keywords: *Alter*nation, scholarly journal editing, guest-editing, peer refereeing system, Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAF).

1 Introduction

With the imminent dawn of the new democratic South Africa on the horizon, a number of scholars met at the former University of Durban-Westville to talk about the possible establishment of a SAPSE-accredited research journal that would be able to accommodate our collectively envisaged new research. The research was to be launched from the then newly founded *Centre for the Study of Literature and Languages in Southern Africa* (CSSALL), under the leadership of Johan van Wyk (see Smit & Van Wyk 2001). One of the immediate needs was to develop an editorial board, and transparent refereeing systems beyond established expectations and practices. Another was to open the

space for inter-disciplinary research—research that would be able to draw on larger research discourse complexes than those entrenched in existing fraternities and filiations. This would allow the fostering of a new dynamics of engaging collective research in the Arts and Humanities focused on specifically southern African socio-political, economic and other related phenomena by authors across the southern African landscape. We also reasoned that this venture would open the prospects of continuing those critical postcolonial and anti- and post-apartheid authorial, publishing and research sentiments to more scholars as well as induct new scholars in similar critically-constructive research.

The main platform for the initial phase of *Alter*nation publications was the developing of an inclusive Southern African Literature and Languages Encyclopaedia (see Van Wyk 2000; Stewart 2007). The content of the Encyclopaedia grew from 4 009 to 35 000 entries over a five year period as a project-within-a-project intended to found a tangible ready-reference tool for the archive, and to serve the CSSALL research agenda of exploring the different South African literatures and languages as one system. Later incorporated into the web-based Wiki of the Encyclopaedia of South African Arts, Culture and Heritage (ESAACH), the encyclopaedia continues to offer an extensive open resource of references to underpin inter-disciplinary research in this area[1].

The incentive was championed by CSSALL with a number of national and international scholars participating in the venture. On the one hand, CSSALL would develop this international focus especially through its bi-annual international conferences. On the other hand, it would induct and cultivate new and emerging researchers and scholars through its Southern African MA and DLitt programmes, as well as the facilitation and nurturing of research among emerging scholars and researchers in the Arts and Humanities. A principle aim was the facilitation and fostering of research in inter-disciplinary nexuses important for the development of the disciplines.

Following the first two issues of *Alter*nation (1994), in 1995 we sought to bring the published research to SAPSE-set levels and in 1996 we achieved SAPSE recognition. As primary editor of 7 issues, co-editor of 4,

[1] Visit the *Encyclopaedia of South African Arts, Culture & Heritage* at: http://www.esaach.org.za. Click on 'encyclopaedia'.

editor-in-chief with guest-editors of 20, and nearly 25 guest-editors[2], I reflect on some of the journal's discursive developments, the systems put in place to build *Alter*nation to what it is today, and some of the lessons learnt. In the process, I also provide perspectives on important developments around the journal, together with some relevant statistical data. In closing, I shall also comment on four important initiatives[3] managed by the Academy of Science of South Africa to both assist the further development and fostering of scholarly research and publication in South Africa and to promote accountability and transparency.

2 A Brief Timeline of the *Alter*nation Publication Record

1 1995. *Alter*nation 2,1 (157 pp.)
Literature and Languages
Ed: Smit

2 1995. *Alter*nation 2,2 (223 pp.)
Literature and Languages
Ed: Smit

3 1996. *Alter*nation 3,1 (202 pp.)
Literature and Languages
Ed: Smit

4 1996. *Alter*nation 3,2 (253 pp.)
Literature and Languages
Ed: Smit

5 1997. *Alter*nation 4,1 (261 pp.)
Literature and Languages
Ed: Smit

6 1997. *Alter*nation 4,2 (277 pp.)
Literature and Languages
Ed: Smit

[2] The developing of *Alter*nation as interdisciplinary journal and the specific thematic issues we have produced over the years would not have been possible without the very constructive contributions of the pool of cooperating guest-editors. In this regard, I need to single out the inputs of the members on the editorial committee who have served as guest-editors, the associate editor, Judith Lütge Coullie, and Catherine Addison, Mandy Goedhals, Rembrandt Klopper, Stephen Leech, Jabulani Mkhize, Shane Moran, Priya Narismulu, Thengani Ngwenya, Mpilo Pearl Sithole, and Graham Stewart. I need to especially thank Rembrandt Klopper for taking on the challenge of developing the journal research themes in the areas of Cognitive Science, Management Studies, and Information Technology.

[3] Since 2005, this initiative has run parallel to and aims at strengthening the regular systems, reports and submissions required by the Department of Higher Education and Training.

7 1998. *Alter*nation 5,1 (275 pp.)
Current Theoretical Perspectives
Gst.Ed: Moran

8 1998. *Alter*nation 5,2 (321 pp.)
Marginal Lit. Figs. and Genres SALit
Eds: Mahonga, Van Wyk & Smit

9 1999. *Alter*nation 6,1 (300 pp.)
The Arts and the African Renaissance
Eds: Ntuli & Smit

10 1999. *Alter*nation 6,2 (300 pp.)
Current Perspectives: Lit & Lang
Ed: Smit

11 2000. *Alter*nation 7,1 (253 pp.)
S.A. Autobiograpical Writing
Gst. Eds: Ngwenya & Mkhize

12 2000. *Alter*nation 7,2 (192 pp.)
Aspects of Development: Humanities
Gst. Eds: Filatova/Goedhals/Leech/ White

13. 2001. *Alter*nation 8,1 (304 pp.)
Symptoms, Theories and Scholarship
Gst. Ed: Coullie

14 2001. *Alter*nation 8,2 (239 pp.)
Critical Perspectives on Intellectuals
Gst. Ed: Moran

15 2002. *Alter*nation 9,1 (261 pp.)
Intercultural Communication
Gst. Ed: Addison

16 2002. *Alter*nation 9,2 (317 pp.)
Humanities Computing
Gst. Ed: Stewart

17 2003. *Alter*nation 10,1 (347 pp.)
Perspectives on Cognitive Science I
Gst. Ed: Klopper

18 2003. *Alter*nation 10,2 (383 pp.)
Perspectives on Cognitive Science II
Gst. Ed: Klopper

2003. *Alter*nation Special Edition 1. (200 pp)
Translations from Baulelaire
Translator and Editor: Mduduzi Dlamini
Cover Design and Layout: Grassic

19 2004. *Alter*nation 11,1 (396 pp.)
Perspectives on Literature and Politics
Gst. Ed: Mkhize

20 2004. *Alter*nation 11,2 (473 pp.)
Sociolinguistics
Gst. Ed: Ramsay-Brijball & Narismulu

21 2005. *Alter*nation 12,1a&b(649 pp.)
Informatics in S.A. Higher Education
Gst. Ed: Klopper

22 2005. *Alter*nation 12,2 (309 pp.)
Informatics in S.A. Higher Education
Gst. Ed: Klopper

2005. *Alter*nation Special Edition 2. (444 pp)
The Study of Religion in Southern Africa.
Essays in Honour of G.C. Oosthuizen.
Editors: Smit & Kumar

23 2006. *Alter*nation 13,1 (357 pp.)
H.E., H.E. Mergers & Africanisation
Gst. Ed: Mekoa

24 2006. *Alter*nation 13,2 (308 pp.)
Social Polarisation
Gst. Eds: Khan & Pattman

25 2007. *Alter*nation 14,1 (316 pp.)
Themes in Management Studies
Gst. Ed: Klopper

26 2007. *Alter*nation 14,2 (237 pp.)
Nature and Power: Forests
Gst. Eds: Addison & Bob

27 2008. *Alter*nation 15,1 (366 pp.)
Nature and People
Gst. Ed: Bob & Addison

28 2008. *Alter*nation 15,2 (426 pp.)
Literature, Language & Cultural Politics
Gst. Eds: Mkhize, Sandwith & Moran

29 2009. *Alter*nation 16,1 (368 pp.)
Themes in Management and Informatics
Gst. Ed: Klopper

30 2009. *Alter*nation 16,2 (383 pp.)
Birds: In and Out of Literature
Gst. Eds: Louw & Mason

2009. *Alter*nation Special Edition 3.
(In preparation)
Religion and Diversity
Editors: Smit & Chetty

3 *Alter*nation's Discursive Developments

In the midst of the launching of *Alter*nation and the Centre for the Study of Southern African Literature and Languages, two especially important discursive considerations occupied our deliberations, e.g. the developing of an inclusive scholarship and knowledge of the literature and languages of southern Africa, and to engage this through interdisciplinary approaches.

Firstly, we felt that since we come from the abject divisionary educational politics of apartheid impacting on the whole population in various ways, an inclusive approach would celebrate and expose those previously marginalised languages and areas of knowledge to rejuvenation and development. In line with the later S.A. Constitutional commitments (adopted in Cape Town on May 8 1996), this focus would be fully inclusive of the earliest inhabitants of our subcontinent—the San and Khoesan—and give full recognition and support to the official languages, the developmental obstacles they experience, and the cultivation of constructive debates and policies to feed into this vital area of education and basic and continued educational and learning nurturing.

Secondly, given the diverse nature of the history of southern African literature, this vital area required projects ranging from the living memory of oral narrative through protest and popular political literature to modern post-apartheid and new generation literary products. Given the dynamic nature of

the literary forms and their responsiveness to time and context, this remains a vital area for continuous development and cultivation, not only in the area of reading and critical analysis but especially that of authorship—as has been recognised, initiated and practiced at a number of institutions in southern Africa.

Thirdly, given the variable local and international significance of the arts and literary productions in, on and from southern Africa, the archaeological or discursive study of the disciplines' archival significance was an equally important area of engagement. Given the various institutional and scholarly archival sedimentations and their international discursive and ideological connections, the important interdisciplinary work on the humanities archive opened the questioning of the archive itself beyond mere scholarly genre and oeuvre studies. Since such research can lay bare some of the dynamics of institutional developments and dynamics in the present, this remains a vital area for further investigation and critical consideration. Moreover the continuous development of this field and the training of a new generation of leaders fully *au fait* with these dynamics, remains a singularly significant challenge.

A further discursive complex was the cultivation of an inquiring and productive research knowledge in the Arts and Humanities. Granted that important questions and research programmes emanating from the post-European Enlightenment and Modernity impacted on southern Africa academia as well as founding ready-made officially sanctioned institutional structures, apparatuses and support for their own ideological persuasions and objectives, it was equally important to develop specifically southern African scholarly tools to continue the deconstructive work started during the last years/decade of apartheid and produce constructive critical tools and thought for the challenges of the new nation.

Fourthly, there was the need to draw on and cultivate often marginalised approaches and thought systems, while on the other hand to bring marginalised experience into the centre for consideration so as to work towards the elimination of all forms of racial, sexual, class and sectarian marginalisation and oppression. The attempt was and remains to continue the study of the excesses of colonial and apartheid modernity and also to critically engage the challenges of the new socio-economic dispensation, as it is still determined by this specific history.

Fifthly, due to its push towards cultivating interdisciplinary research, it soon became clear that the exclusive focus on literature and languages needed expanding. As important as this focus is for archival and discursive studies—the archive represents itself in different forms of literature and language representation—the study of disciplinary productions related to settler and colonial activities and practices, frontier interactions related to natural history, anthropology, geography, and religion as well as the significance of indigenous historical movements, became necessary. For this purpose it was decided to switch *Alter*nation's subtitle from 'International Journal for the Study of Southern African Literature and Languages' to 'Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of the Arts and Humanities in Southern Africa' from the beginning of Volume 11 of 2004. This has opened the way for a more rigorous scholarly engagement of current issues impacting on the Arts and Humanities—such as the rising disciplinary complexes of Cognitive Science, Information Technology and Management Studies—as well as the broadening of the disciplinary field to ecological and other related areas of study.

Finally, many participants engaged in a wide variety of debates on many of the issues mentioned. Since the days when questions were raised about the singular in 'Literature' and the plural in 'Languages' in the CSSALL nomenclature, to the current questions around ecology, *Alter*nation's commitments remain with the issues mentioned above, as these form important elements of the unfinished project of the alter-nation.

4 *Alter*nation Systems

4.1 The Editorial Board

There are different understandings of the notion of the scholarly editorial board. In general, however, the board of a scholarly journal comprises members who regularly serve as referees, and a number of international and/ or national advisory board members. This is how *Alter*nation started out. However, due to its interdisciplinary focus, it soon became clear that we needed to draw in more members than planned to cover the refereeing of submissions existing members could not cater for. The next phase was to realise that the few from the different disciplines co-opted for refereeing purposes could not cover all the aspects of the refereeing process; we thus decided to move into a full-scale guest-editing system. This system allows for the assembling

of a specialist referee panel focused on each individual themed issue. In order to give due recognition to these scholars' contributions to the production of the journal issue, we decided to publish their names in each issue. In future, they will form part of the 'editorial associates', with the editorial board becoming a more limited number of scholars, responsible for the setting of the journal's research agendas and the functioning, managing, associated with the journal.

In terms of my experience, editorial board changes can take place on a continuous basis as some scholars withdraw and others are added. As a rule of thumb, however, one should consider making more substantial changes on at least a five year cycle. This will enable scholars who have made a commitment to the journal's projects to plan in terms of their own time limits, and permit those who have 'moved on' to resign. This will ensure that the journal does not carry members who have changed direction in their scholarly endeavours, lost interest or failed to indicate their decision to withdraw. In this way, a five year re-assessment of the board will also create openings for young and new researchers interested in developing their own research interests and career profile, in a planned and coordinated way.

4.2 The Guest-editing System

The period since 1994 saw a number of complex challenges confronting academia in southern Africa. One of the main kinds of response came from governmental and parastatal think-tanks and policy development initiatives. Another came from the implementation of systems and structures so produced. The ultimate question, however—as has been recognised by many of our country's leaders too—concerns the quality of the personnel that would develop, institute, populate, occupy positions and manage and steer these systems and structures, in line with constitutional and other societal expectations, challenges, incentives and exigencies. The kind of intellectual we want to function in our systems for the benefit of the people will be determined by the kind of country we want to live in[4]. It is in answering this question that

[4] This problematic inclusive plural is being defined variously by different role players in the country. Even so, in *Alter*nation perspective, this forms part of the collective that is continuously being negotiated in our multicultural and plural society.

*Alter*nation has engaged the research issues it has[5], but more significantly, cultivated nearly 25 academic editors. All of the editors learnt our editing skills at the coal-face of *Alter*nation's editing process—where the production of one volume normally takes about a full year from start to finish—work which is undertaken in addition to one's regular teaching and research duties. Initially it became necessary to employ guest-editors merely because the volume of work became too much for only a few individuals taking responsibility for all the activities related to the refereeing and editing processes. With the related discursive developments around Alternation (pointed to above), it also became necessary to cultivate scholars who could become key leaders in the area of their own interdisciplinary interests. This is the most important area for cultivating future research leaders and academic research managers. The most obvious procedure to follow is to register a research project with a number of like-minded researchers and graduate students, go through the research process, and produce a SAPSE recognised journal issue as at least one major outcome. Rigorous double blind peer-review forms one of the keystones of the SAPSE system, and as southern African scholarship raises the quality levels and increases the impacts of its scholarship, this will become an even more important feature for international recognition and collaboration. Teams of researchers working on specific issues can then collectively produce knowledge that covers a broad field in coordinated ways. In these processes, the cultivation of research specialists can follow a coordinated and forward planning process. The guest-editing system can play a crucial role here and may ensure that we receive intellectuals into working life who are not only knowledgeable and informed about the latest developments in the research fields, the cultivation of the appropriate measures, mechanisms and attitudes towards the actual implementation of such knowledge but more importantly, relevant knowledge production.

[5] See for instance: *Report on a Strategic Approach to Research Publishing in South Africa*, published by ASSAf in March 2006 at: http://www.assaf.org.za/images/assaf_strategic_research_publishing.pdf.
See especially the 'Conclusions and Recommendations for a Strategically-enhanced Research Publishing in South Africa' by Wieland Gevers, Xola Mati, Johann Mouton, Roy Page-Shipp, Monica Hammes, and Anastassios Pouris at: http://www.assaf.org.za/images/Report/assaf_chapter6.pdf.

4.3 The Guest-editing Process

At *Alter*nation, we devised a very basic guest-editing application process. Together with guidelines for the refereeing process, leading up to the final submission for publication to the editor, the prospective editor(s) also receive a very basic form that has to be completed and submitted to the editor. The form requires the personal details and CV(s) of the prospective editor(s), the provisional theme of the issue, a brief critical overview and explanation of the significance of the research theme with secondary themes, the positioning of the research in the larger field, and the names of prospective authors with provisional abstracts of their papers for the journal issue. The prospective guest-editors should also sign an agreement that they will follow all rules and requirements laid down by the Alternation Board, in terms of the ASSAf *National Code of Best Practice in Editorial Discretion and Peer Review for South African Scholarly Journals*. At this stage, editor(s) may also indicate which of the prospective authors as well as alternative scholars in the field will serve as referees. This is a very important part of the exercise because it will indicate from the outset the standing, the potential research impact, the issue may have in the field. Applications that form part of an existing research group's prospective research output—such as a colloquium—or research projects registered with the NRF or other national and international research funders are especially encouraged.

If the project is approved—which may be prior or subsequent to the commencement of the research project or on completion of the colloquium—the guest-editor(s) will identify a final number of reviewers—at least two per manuscript—for the proposed articles for the reviewing process. They will simultaneously set dates for the authors' final manuscript submissions. As these are received, the editors will email them out for reviewing, minus the authors' names or personal details. Normally we set about '6 weeks or a.s.a.p.' as the turn-around time for reviews to be submitted. In situations where the guest-editor(s) have any queries, they may approach the editor-in-chief and/ or his/ her nominee. When the review process is completed, the guest-editor(s) will formulate a summary of reviewer comments, recommendations for improvement, or reasons for the non-acceptance of a manuscript, and email that to the author. Authors whose manuscripts have been accepted for publication will have about 6 weeks for resubmission. Changes can be resubmitted in marked-up format for the editor to then accept or decline the

improvements or changes to the manuscript. If there are some reviewer recommendations not attended to, the author needs to provide the reasons to the editor(s). When this process is completed, all approved and improved manuscripts are submitted to the editor-in-chief for the editorial board or its nominees' final scrutiny and approval. In consultation with the editor-in-chief, this committee may appoint independent specialist referees willing to form part of the final screening and reviewing of the articles. If any improvements are still required, or if an article is not accepted, as well as the information about the articles which have passed the final screening process, will then be conveyed to the guest-editor(s), who will inform the authors.

Guest-editors are responsible for matching reviewers fit to review each of the articles in terms of their specific interdisciplinary representation. This ensures that if one reviewer turns the article down, the second reviewer report may indicate whether one should merely submit to a third reviewer or refer it back to the original reviewer to provide more information about how it may be improved. This is best practice, because even if the article is poor, such reviewers normally give positive feedback for improvement, if they see potential in the article. Even in cases where an article is not accepted for publication, reasons need to be given, as well as comments about whether the article might have potential if certain issues are attended to. It is also recommended that reviewers not merely turn an article down, but that they provide reasons for doing so or provide reasons and recommendations in terms of the potential of the article. If editors have any doubts at any point in the process, they can always consult with fellow editorial committee members or the editor(s) in chief.

Ultimately, the editorial board's main objective remains the mentorship and induction of new and young editors into the editing processes. Even more than training researchers, it is the training of research editors which form an important challenge for bringing the research knowledge the South African scholarly community produce, into the public domain.

4.4 The Refereeing System

*Alter*nation publishes a large variety of research articles. Among others, these include those engaging critical discourse development in specific areas, literary-critical analyses and interpretation, empirical research papers involv-

ing both qualitative and quantitative research, and critical scholarly position papers. Over the last few years, the editorial board has developed a number of referee forms that cater for each of the kinds of thematic issues each journal deals with. Depending on the kind of research involved in the papers submitted for a specific issue, the following are items that guest-editors should consider including in their review forms where reviewers will be required to rate and comment on each paper in terms of a selection of the following items:

Form 1: Individual Items

1. Meeting of national and international standards of scholarly publications;
2. Comparison and rating of article with previous publications in *Alter*nation;
3. Recommendation for publication and reasons why/ why not;
4. Assessment of the relationship between theory and practice in the article;
5. Assessment of the quality of the argument;
6. Comprehensive and exhaustive covering of available literature/ bibliography on the topic;
7. Use of sources and efficient integration of references;
8. Articulation of argument and conclusions drawn in the article;
9. Clarity and accuracy in formulation;
10. Recommendations for the improving of the article;
11. If the paper is turned down, the reviewer needs to provide reasons and some advice to the author with regard to why it has been turned down.

Form 2: The Standard Social-scientific Research Report Format

Articles that report empirical results should comply with *the logic of scientific discovery*. This means that they should have at least the following sections (which may very well have more imaginative headings) and be reviewed in terms of each of these:

1. A statement of problem/s section;
2. A research methodology section. In the case of articles based on quantitative analysis, the author must briefly explain how s/he identified a representative sample of respondents or interviewees (in the case of interviews) from among the target population, and how s/he collected and analysed the data. Did the researcher use a technique of convenience sampling or did s/he use some form of random sampling?
3. A literature review section. In the case of articles that are based on qualitative analysis, the author should make a critical comparative analysis of existing frameworks or models, or should use the principles of logic to derive and propose her/his own model.
4. An interpretation of results section; and
5. A conclusions and recommendations section.

An important part of the research is to evaluate the quality of the evidence[6] as it relates to:

- primary data collected by the researcher and the relevance of the data to the research problem;
- interpretation of secondary data that are already in the public domain, which were previously collected and analysed by other researchers, and which the author is subjecting to critical analysis and/ or different interpretive or analytical approaches. This could also entail a critical comparison of different sets of data;
- A critical analysis of conclusions of other authors regarding data, frameworks or models in the public domain;
- Unsupported statements or opinions of authorities in a field per se do not count as scientific data.

[6] See the report edited by Jonathan Jansen, Wieland Gevers and Xola Mati on *Evidence-based Practice: 'Double Symposium' on Problems, Possibilities and Politics* at: http://www.assaf.co.za/wpcontent/uploads/reports/ evidence-based/evidence_based_practice.pdf.

Form 3: Position Papers

Position papers should show sufficient knowledge of the field, discipline and/ or policy to then explore or critically discuss specific especially contentious issues with insight, in order to provide direction and contribute to the discourse development in the field. In order to stimulate debate and dialogue, position papers may also be provocative or of a problematising nature. They should be written lucidly, engage other authors critically and constructively, and display erudition regarding the issues under consideration.

4.5 Authorship and Co-authorship Policy

Authors and co-authors take responsibility for meeting all the basic requirements with regard to the sector-specific benchmarks and expectations of research ethics. Where researchers co-publish with colleagues, students and private sector individuals, the normal protocols must be adhered to. These include issues such as collective decision making with regard to the first author – normally the individual who made the most substantial input into the research – the final text of the article as the product-outcome of the research, critical perspectives, etc. All queries should be addressed to the guest editor(s) or the editor-in-chief or associate editor.

4.6 Conflict of Interest Policy

The primary reason why *Alter*nation functions through a guest-editing system is to train and foster the teaching and skilling of new academic editors on a continuous basis. Through this process, editors are empowered to become experts not only in their own disciplinary field but also in the relevant area(s) of adjacent related interdisciplinary fields of research and the articulation of fields in the interdisciplinary domain. For these reasons, editors are expected to undertake substantial research and other value adding contributions—such as book reviews, etc.—to the issues they edit. This ensures the cultivation of leaders in the research field, the continued development of the interdisciplinary field and the establishing of editors and collaborators as ‘owners’ of the knowledge do produced. This latter point means that the knowledge is not merely produced and left without application. It is the responsibility of the editor(s) to be at the forefront of the interpretation, application and use of the research and knowledge so produced.

In line with the objective of enhancing research capacity through the supervision of young and new researchers, editors will, where possible, involve and publish with supervised graduates and colleagues. This ensures that the knowledge produced at the graduate levels is brought into the public domain, and that the editor(s) and their collaborators then take responsibility to further the research-generated knowledge in the scholarly and public domains.

In order to ensure fair, transparent, and non-exclusionary processes, guest-editors who are responsible for the refereeing process (including the pool of referees for each issue), consult with the editor-in-chief on any difficulties which may arise, from matters such as conflicting referee reports, feedback for improving of manuscripts and rewriting, or non-acceptance. Depending on their own expertise, guest-editors as well as the editor-in-chief may function as referees, even though both parties also serve as part of the final approving committee, responsible for the final approval of the journal issue being edited. It is the responsibility of the editor-in-chief to oversee the whole editing process, mentor guest editors, and be updated on the progress of the editing of the issue, be informed about difficulties as they arise, provide guidance in related decisions, and constitute the committee that finally approves the issue to be published, after having perused all referee reports as well as the full final version of the issue to be published. An important aspect of the process is that when the editor-in-chief functions as editor of a special edition, the associate editor or a nominated editorial committee member will function in the capacity of editor-in-chief.

The editor-in-chief and guest editors are ultimately responsible for the compliance with best practice as laid down in the "National Code of Best Practice in Editorial discretion and Peer Review" developed by ASSAf.

4.7 Guidelines to Keeping the Alternation Referee Register

The main reasons for the keeping of a referee register are both practical and strategic. On the practical side, it assists in managing, coordinating and keeping track of a process that can potentially become muddled. Strategically, it ensures the confidentiality of authors and reviewers as well as the coordinated development of the knowledge produced—i.e. to meet the goals and objectives initially set for the colloquium or research project and how these

fit into the overall country-wide objectives related to strategic publishing[7]. On the practical side, the guidelines for the keeping of the Alternation referee register are as follows:

All Alternation referee registers are confidential. Only the guest-editor(s), editor(s)-in-chief and associate editor(s) have access to the register. Additional people may be provided with access on recommendation of guest-editor(s) and final approval by the editor(s)-in-chief and/ or someone designated by him/ her.

Before the submission of articles to reviewers editors must procure referee cooperation and contact details. Authors of articles of the specific Alternation issue may be used for the review of other articles submitted by authors where the editor(s) are not aware of any conflict of interests. (In line with regular practice, authors may identify peers they would not like to function as referees.)

All editors involved in the production of an *Alter*nation issue must decide on the referee form format to be used. They may use the standard one, one of the other two samples developed for empirical research projects, or they may develop their own in consultation with the editor-in-chief.

On receipt of an article, the guest-editor or his or the administrative assistant he or she works with, enter the author and title on the register and save the article in an appropriate file in the format 01 Coullie, 02 Narismulu, 03 Ngwenya, 10 Smit, 11 … 99. This ensures easy navigation of the articles in the file, up to the point where the final sequence of articles has been identified, just before the writing of the 'Introduction' to the volume.

Identify two referees to referee the article, and email the article together with the chosen form to the referee. Give the referee a maximum of 6 weeks (or a.s.a.p.) to read and referee the article. The reason for the 'a.s.a.p.' is that if given longer periods, referees may put the refereeing off till later, often forgetting about it. We have learnt that the a.s.a.p. works well because

[7] See the *Report on a Strategic Approach to Research Publishing in South Africa* above. Since conflict of interests may arise in this area—between reviewers or between a reviewer and an author—the register allows one to keep track of all correspondence, as well as provide members of the editorial team, with information on the process and the various communications between the reviewers and the authors involved.

it is something the reviewer can put on the urgent list but also remember to do before the 6 weeks expiry date.

If an article is accepted by both referees, inform the author. If the reviewers provided information on how the author could still improve on the article or, as in some cases, provided a marked-up version of the article, send that anonymous information to the author, i.e. not mentioning the names of the reviewers.

If an article is turned down by both referees, inform the author that it has not been accepted for publication. If the reviewers provided information on how the author could still improve the article, send that anonymous information to the author, indicating that the author may revise the article and submit it elsewhere.

If an article is turned down by one referee, and approved by another, identify a third referee and send the article to this referee.

If this referee turns down the article, then it is not accepted for publication. Inform the author that it has not been accepted. If the reviewer provided information on how the author could still improve the article, send that anonymous information to the author but state clearly that it will not be considered for *Alter*nation again.

If this referee recommends publication, then it is accepted. Inform the author that it has been accepted for publication. If the reviewer provided information on how the author could still improve on the article, send that anonymous information to the author.

If an article has potential according to the guest editor(s), but has been turned down by one or both referees, the article may be submitted to the editor-in-chief and/ or associate editor for recommendation of publication and/ or reconsideration by new or alternative referees. This process will only be followed in exceptional cases, with convincing persuasion by guest-editor(s).

As the refereeing process is in the process of being finalised, with the final content crystallizing, submit the articles for final approval and quality control to the editor-in-chief who, on acceptance of articles, will do a final reviewing of the accepted articles.

Galley-proofs are sent to guest-editors who then have to get formal confirmation of text and references from authors—with minor corrections where needed—within 6 weeks or sooner.

The refereeing process is completed, when all articles accepted for publication have been signed off by the guest editor(s) and accepted for publication by the editorial committee or its representative(s).

The editorial assistant is involved throughout this process and in different capacities. The guest-editor(s)' final activity is to submit the Referee Register, all electronic reviews—at least two per author—and other relevant correspondence, to the editorial assistant. These will be filed and archived for a five year period as prescribed by current research data convention.

4.8 Conclusion of the Process

This mainly deals with the collation and submission of all relevant documentation to the editorial assistant for audit and archival purposes. These include the reviews, the review register with the information of the reviewers, marked-up articles—where available—and relevant correspondence between the authors and guest-editors, and the latter and the editor-in-chief and the associate editor(s).

5 Value-adding

Apart from value-adding features such as a good editorial, a good and helpful introduction, an abstract and key concepts for each article, and book review articles and possible internet links to enrich the web experience and learning, one of the most sought after features is the book review. For this reason—and in consultation with guidelines from some international publishers *Alter*nation's guidelines for book reviews comprise of the following.

1. Description of book contents - topics, range of issues and focuses covered, field of study, interdisciplinary perspectives, etc.
2. Mentioning noteworthy features of the book - significant contributors, engagements of existing discourses, new insights, adding to existing knowledge, etc.
3. Pointing at valuable characteristics and deficiencies ranging from having an index, helpful appendices, to important existing research and scholars not engaged, being slapdash, etc.

4. Indicate potential readers, researchers, students and employees who might find it helpful, (scholars, general public, etc.).

Reviews must follow the Alternation style and references from the book reviewed, put in brackets referred to with (p. 00); or, (p. 000, n. 4); or, (pp. 00-00). The review must also be accompanied by

> *Title*.
> By Author(s)/ Editor(s)/ Translator(s)
> Place of publication: Publisher, date, total number of pages
> ISBN: ……

It is recommended that reviews not exceed 600 words. Longer reviews will however also be published.

6 The *Alter*nation Website

The *Alter*nation website is located at http://alternation.ukzn.ac.za. It contains all volumes produced so far and will be further developed throughout 2010 with links to other relevant websites and archival resources. Existing volumes will be re-edited to match the system currently followed, e.g. including an abstract for each article. An extensive subject list is also being developed for the search function.

7 Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) Incentives

As part of the Partnership Project of the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), Department of Science and Technology (DST) and Department of Education (DoE), processes were initiated to enhance and advance scholarly research in South Africa.

7.1 The Accreditation Policy Study (2005)

This was an extensive questionnaire submitted to all editors for completion by February 2005. Aimed at the move towards the formulation of a coherent and coordinated accreditation policy study for SAPSE journals in South Af-

rica, it solicited data from editors of South African research journals, using a survey questionnaire as research instrument.

7.2 The National Code of Best Practice in Editorial Discretion and Peer Review (2008)

This document[8] was the result of the work one by the National Scholarly Editors' Forum[9]. It deals with the three important issues of:

1. Fundamental Principles of Research Publishing: Providing the Building Blocks to the Matrix of Human Knowledge;
2. The Core Role of Editors; and
3. The Indispensable Functions of Peer Reviewers.

7.3 The ASSAf Research Panel on: Ways to enhance incentives for Scholarly Journal Editors in South Africa (03 March 2009)

This brief questionnaire[10] was aimed at providing information on the personal views of editors in their editorial capacity. This became necessary because there is a general recognition of the very important work done by editors, honorary editors and the journals' editorial teams and associates; this work is done with no material incentives, official recognition for their work both in- and outside the scholarly community—e.g. professional peers, employers and funding agencies—or, in most cases, also no or very limited infrastructural and logistical support.

[8] See: http://www.assaf.org.za/images/National%20Code%20of%20Best % 20Practice%20Body% 20Content.pdf.

[9] See the *Terms of Reference of the National Scholarly Editors' Forum of South Africa* at: http://www.assaf.org.za/images/Terms%20of%20Reference %20Body%20Content.pdf.

[10] See the draft questionnaire at: Preliminary Questionnaire Directed to Editors by the Peer Review Panel. December 2008. http://www.assaf.org.za /images/CSPiSA_PRPs_ questionnaire.doc.

7.4 The Committee on Scholarly Publishing in South Africa (CSPiSA): Discipline-Grouped Peer Review of South African Scholarly Journals - Preliminary Questionnaire Directed to Editors by the Peer Review Panel

This committee[11] is one of ASSAf's committees and mandated by the Departments of Education and Science and Technology to develop and put in place a system for the quality assurance of South African scholarly journals. The process comprises of external peer review and related quality audits of our journals in five-year cycles.

8 Closing Reflections

It is one thing to be critical of past scholarship impacted on by colonial and apartheid discursive formations while one continues to remain incapacitated towards the production of a disalienating and inclusive scholarship and thought. Most of *Alter*nation's published research has pondered and engaged the challenges manifesting and emanating from this broadly postcolonial discursive space. The aim is to problematise from within our own discursive antinomies and conundrums. It is only when we untangle the specific kinds of socio-economic challenges we face, that we shall be able to develop the kind of liveable, just and humane postcolonial world we want. In this process, it is imperative that new and young researchers be allowed to 'think for themselves' and we collectively produce graduates who can develop their own research proposals, do their own research with, in, by, and for their own community, or more further a-field, do their own statistical analyses, and write it up in their own words without the need of a language or style editor[12]. It is in pursuit of these objectives that *Alter*nation serves the Arts and Humanities.

[11] See the decisions related to the founding of this committee at: http://www.docstoc.com/docs/18566557/ACADEMY-OF-SCIENCE-OF-SOUTH-AFRICA-(ASSAf)

[12] At present current computer programmes have developed to such an extent that even where English is not one's mother tongue, one could produce texts that meet the basic requirements of good grammatically correct writing. In the very near future, the same will doubtlessly be possible for our indigenous languages.

Apart from providing a brief retrospective on the fifteen years of *Alter*nation's and CSSALL's existence, another objective of this article was to provide a brief exposition of the processes and procedures we follow in the editing processes and procedures of *Alter*nation. This could be used to provide guidelines to prospective guest-editors as well as the instituting of similar guest-editing systems in other journals. We shall no doubt continue to develop and refine our own system.

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