

On the Beginnings of *Anthropology Matters Journal*

Interviews with *Ian Harper, Rebecca Marsland, David Mills, Jakob Rigi, James Staples*
(Compiled by co-editors Mary-Anne Decatur and Siobhan Magee)¹

Anthropology Matters Journal and its mailing list are twenty years old. Established in 1999 out of the student-led seminar Ethnography at the Third Millennium held at SOAS, by 2002 the journal was available open access online. For our final issue as co-editors, we spoke with some of those involved in Anthropology Matters' foundation about its beginnings, open access, and the changing expectations of when and where it is thought best for early career scholars to publish. These short, separate interviews describe memories of collaborative work undertaken primarily as PhD students done with the aim of developing a supportive space for graduate students and their research.

The act of remembering has also been a collaborative process, with founding member David Mills noting that it is a lesson in history as plurality. Each person had their own slightly different, inevitably partial reconstructions shaped in part by when they joined the project and their own interests. Multiple narratives become tidied up into a single, linear story line.

¹ Interviews have been edited slightly for repetition and clarity.

The history of Anthropology Matters also exists in the form of archival evidence on the internet. The original version of the website from 2002 can be viewed via the Internet Archive, as can the 1999 webpages for the Ethnography at the Third Millennium seminar. We have included snippets from and links to these archives as another form of memory and remembering.

What do you remember about the early days of Anthropology Matters?

Ian Harper (University of Edinburgh)

Anthropology Matters was started by a group of us studying for PhDs at SOAS from around the late 1990s. We felt that there was an issue with the PhD programme, in that it did not always address the issues that we wanted to look into (the arrogance of youth?); and we formed a group that we called 'Ethnography at the Third Millennium (E@TM)',² named with a nod towards Donna Haraway! We carved out a space for addressing the issues we wished to look at, organising a series of seminars and events, with support from the Department and we invited scholars and others that we wanted to. Mary Douglas came, for example, and we had sessions where we explored the power in the Department using PRA [participatory rural appraisal] techniques, issues around writing ethnography and the like. We had a brainstorming session as to what would be useful for us: what else was happening in both London at other universities, and beyond?; an email list that linked us together so that we could share information; and a space where young anthropology scholars emerging from their PhDs could write and publish.

There was a fairly large group of us at SOAS: myself, David Mills, Beckie Marsland, James Staples, Sheila Fish, Celayne Heaton-Shrestha, Stan Frankland, Andrew Irving, Damian

² E@TM was sometimes pronounced 'eat me'.

Walter, Jakob Klein, Jakob Rigi, and others.³ We formed a core group – fluctuating as folks went away on, and returned from fieldwork – and submitted a proposal to C-SAP [Centre for Sociology, Anthropology, and Politics]⁴ for some funds, which we were granted, and used to pay for some of the core activities, particularly related to web costs. We then set up a committee and divided ourselves up into coordinating and organising the various aspects of the work. It created a strong sense of purpose and was a vibrant thing to be a part of. It was a lot of fun, and in no small part because it was proper teamwork, away from the individualised and (in my opinion) overly competitive PhD environment.

Rebecca Marsland (University of Edinburgh)

It started with 'Ethnography at the Third Millennium', which Ian [Harper] could tell you more about. When I started my PhD at SOAS, in 1999 I think, there was this class called 'Ethnography at the Third Millennium', which was E@TM and that had been set up by Ian Harper and David Mills, who is now at Oxford, amongst others.⁵ Ian was a couple of years ahead of me in his PhD at that stage. And they'd set it up because they'd wanted the faculty at SOAS to take them more seriously as students and to have more of a voice in their own teaching, so that was set up to be a self-run classroom. We would turn up at the beginning of the year and set the agenda for what we wanted to teach. Everyone would either run a class ourselves or seek out somebody to do that for us. I think I did one on participatory methods and I might have got David Mosse involved.

That all happened and I went away to do fieldwork for two years and when I came back, Anthropology Matters had been set up and it was in its first year. The student run class was still running. They had funding from C-SAP, which was at Birmingham I think. So they'd been given some funding and the first thing that happened was they'd set up a journal and

³ David Herold and Jennifer Law were also involved.

⁴ We would like to thank David Mills for letting us access the original C-SAP application. This has been uploaded to the anthropologymatters.com website.

⁵ Rebecca Marsland wrote about a 1999 writing workshop held by E@TM in the second issue of *Anthropology Matters Journal*. You can read it [here](#).

it was Damian Walter and James Staples who were the first editors of that. We were all PhD students at SOAS. It was a paper-based journal. The idea was it would give PhD students a guide on how to go through the publishing process. So, working out writing your own journal article, going through the peer review process, going through the peer review, right through to getting a final publication.

The next step was that we took it online and that's when I got a lot more involved. We had lots of meetings and somebody had some web design expertise. We decided to set up an email list, which took off in an extraordinary manner, actually.⁶ Originally, we were going to do things like share seminar details and share information about events because one thing we'd realised was that PhD students often don't get informed about when workshops and conferences are taking place. And now they really do. If someone's looking for someone to go on a panel at a conference, often Anthropology Matters is the place where they'll look for someone. We decided to put the journal online too. I can't remember why we decided to do that – we just did. I got more involved in that stage. I'd had experience working in publishing already and doing writing and editorial work at [science and health research foundation] the Wellcome Trust and at [British multinational publishing company] Dorling Kindersley so I had editorial skills and so did James Staples. He'd also worked as an editor, I think at the TUC [the Trades Union Congress]. So it took off from there...

David Mills (Oxford)

The bare bones are that some of us students were encouraged by a then-lecturer in the Department at SOAS, Stuart Thompson, to apply to a Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)-funded teaching enhancement initiative called the (National Network for Teaching and Learning Anthropology (NNTLA) run by Sue Wright. She has written about that elsewhere. We got 10k (a lot to run a seminar series!) and we tried our best to create a legacy. I had left SOAS by 1998 but the seminar continued (given the Harawayian name

⁶ An archive of the mailing list starting in 2002 is available [here](#).

E@TM) and then the idea developed into a journal. We were of course idealistic about its potential, but unrealistic about what could be achieved.

The history was written in a number of ways, but, story of my academic life, never reached publication! We tried to envisage it as a development project, and, inspired by the post-development critiques of [Wolfgang] Sachs et al., wrote it up accordingly. I am too embarrassed to re-read it.⁷

Jakob Rigi (Central European University)

I believe it was started in 1997 by a postgraduate student-led weekly seminar facilitated by Stuart Thompson and David Mills, who was writing his PhD. Stuart was a member of staff. Ian Harper, Celayne Heaton, and I were part of the group. She was a wonderful, collegial and very enthusiastic person. The name of the seminar was not Anthropology Matters, or perhaps it was, I don't remember. The journal has its roots in the seminar. We had a core group of around twelve people, all of whom were very involved. We presented our research and also discussed state of the art literature. Sometimes we invited external guests. We also organised a workshop at SOAS at which Richard Fardon spoke about methodology.

James Staples (Brunel)

I think it came out of something that PhD students had set up at SOAS called E@TM (Ethnography at the Third Millennium) in the late 1990s. E@TM was configured as a research student-led weekly seminar—established a year or so before I arrived at SOAS to start my own PhD in 1998—which aimed at bringing together researchers at different

⁷ A draft of an article by David Mills along with Ian Harper, David Herold, Jakob Rigi, and Stuart Thompson about the project was published on the Ethnography at the Third Millennium webpages in 2000 and is available [here](#).

stages of their research trajectories, pre- and post-fieldwork, to share their experiences, offer mutual support, and so on.

E@TM was already running when I got to SOAS: Ian Harper and David Mills had been heavily involved in the initial set-up, and Stuart Thompson—who was a staff member in the department at SOAS—helped to co-ordinate the seminar and provided continuity. As for the Anthropology Matters project which grew out of it—and which eventually got some funding from C-SAP—I recall that Ian Harper was the driving force beyond it, although a number of us who were involved in E@TM were also involved, formally or informally, with getting it off the ground. There were a group of us from SOAS who were part of the initial steering group, and we were joined fairly soon after by Christine Barry and Mário Guimarães,⁸ who at the time were PhD students at Brunel.

From the Archives

The below extracts from Ethnography at the Third Millennium webpages describe how the early foundations of the Anthropology Matters project were articulated in 1998, before *Anthropology Matters Journal* came into existence.⁹ At a time when less than ten percent of UK households had internet access, the first session of E@TM handled the topic of ethnographic research online. By the time *Anthropology Matters Journal* was published online in 2002, over forty percent of households had internet access (ONS 2019). This focus on online worlds speaks to the extent to which the increasingly accessible internet was at the forefront of people's minds as a method of communication and connection.

⁸ Mário Guimarães sadly passed away in 2005. Christine Barry shared news of his passing and an event celebrating of his life using the Anthropology Matters mailing list in a post available [here](#). Guimarães helped design the Anthropology Matters' website and journal layout. His groundbreaking work in cyber-ethnography was published as a book chapter in 2005 entitled 'Doing Anthropology in Cyberspace: Fieldwork Boundaries and Social Environments' in *Virtual Methods: Issues in Social Research on the Internet*, edited by Christine Hine.

⁹ The original 1998 webpages are available [here](#) and [here](#).

Planning and Publicity

The whole process began in 1996, with an attempt to counter SOAS Ph.D. student isolation by putting together a directory of all anthropology postgraduate researchers. This was done by Jennifer Law and David Mills, who subsequently were given the chance to put together a funding proposal to the National Network for Teaching and Learning Anthropology (NNTLA), for a project to foster this new sense of community. They took advice from a number of departmental staff, and particularly Stuart Thompson, Lecturer in Asian Anthropology, who subsequently became a key course facilitator. An experimental research seminar was proposed, and succeeded in gaining funding. This story is told more fully in the funding proposal.

The next stage was for the facilitators to write a Welcome Letter to all the new students, to tell them about our plans. We used this to publicise the project to existing students. This was not wholly successful, especially as many rarely come in the department. Looking back, we recognise that not all the staff members understood what was happening, or explained to their existing research students. Communication is crucial, and we could have done more to keep everyone informed

Putting together an email list of all the participants was an invaluable way of keeping everyone in the seminar informed about what was happening, and also of sharing decisions with those who had missed a session or a discussion.

Where? When? How?

We met weekly, from 3-5 pm on a Monday, in a large SOAS classroom on the ground floor of the building. Too big for our purposes, we made it more informal by arranging some chairs into a small circle. We made use of an Overhead Projector and white-board when appropriate, and occasionally also the VCR. A few of the sessions were taped with a video camera.

Key ingredients for the seminar's success included a plentiful supply of tea, coffee and chocolate biscuits! We brought down a kettle from the department, together with some Styrofoam cups we'd bought from the local supermarket. The facilitators had the task of bringing a pint or two of fresh milk, as well as ensuring that the 'ethno-biscuit' box was kept full.

First session began with an introduction, and a discussion of the aims of the seminar. The facilitators planned a couple of the initial meetings to get things started. The theme was 'Ethnographic research on the Net', and included a hands-on session, and a discussion by a visiting speaker who is doing research on virtual Mormon communities. After these initial weeks, people within the group took up the initiative to plan and organise sessions on topics in which they had either some experience or interest.

How did Anthropology Matters come to include a journal?

Ian Harper

We felt that a space for writing and publishing, when in that liminal space of being a PhD student and entering into the early stages of an academic career (if that was where we were heading) was important. Opportunities for publishing, for those of us in these early stages seemed somewhat limited. We were also lucky in that a couple of us also had editing experience: Beckie Marsland and James Staples, so it seemed something that would be viable.

Jakob Rigi

I believe in the second year, 1998-99, we came up with idea about the journal. And, we co-authored one of the first articles with Tomoko Kurihara.¹⁰ It was about teaching and learning anthropology from below. Then I left SOAS in 1999 for Edinburgh and ever since then I have not been involved. Others continued it.

¹⁰ Rigi's article 'Alternative pedagogy of learning and teaching Anthropology', co-authored with Tomoko Kurihara and Celayne Heaton, was published in 1999 and is available [here](#). At that time the journal was called *E@TM journal: Anthropology from Below* and became *Anthropology Matters Journal* in 2002.

James Staples

The idea of AM (the name came out of collective discussion, but I think Stuart Thompson's suggestion of 'Ethnography Matters' was the basis of it) was to form a post-graduate network that went wider than SOAS. Social media hadn't taken off at that point in the way that it did subsequently, and so one of the key objectives was to have a searchable register of anthropology PhD students and early career researchers along with their interests, which would enable us to connect with others working on similar projects. There was also a blog, aimed at creating debate, and a JISC-mail list on which we could share calls-for-papers and other things of general interest to anthropologists. The register for some reason never got very far, and it was very difficult to get people to engage in discussion on the blog. But the JISC-mail list had an enormous number of people sign-up to it. It's still very active. The idea for a journal was also there from the beginning. With the tagline 'Anthropology from Below', it was about giving research students the opportunity to get their first peer-reviewed publications in what was perhaps a less intimidating environment. For those of us involved in it, it also provided the opportunity to develop peer-reviewing, copy-editing and publishing skills—as well as to read a lot of very good material that was being produced by researchers from their initial fieldwork.

What prompted the decision to put the journal online?

Ian Harper

We decided from the start that it should be online. In fact, it wasn't just that the journal should be online, but that our entire presence should be online. While we were based at SOAS we still wanted to reach out across the postgraduate community to other areas. However, given that this was a while ago the biggest issue we had was expertise for the development website and managing that. We felt it best to keep this in house, which meant training and this was a constant headache. With the move to the ASA [Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth] we managed to get this support.

Jakob Rigi

This was probably out of enthusiasm for activism. I am really surprised and indeed very impressed that the journal has survived. Its social history is definitely interesting.

James Staples

The first issues were produced in hard copy only, photocopied and stapled together. I can't recall how we distributed it—I think we might have sent a bundle of copies to each Anthropology department in the UK—but there was a recognition that it would be available to more people if it was online, and the website that we were establishing helped to facilitate that. A number of us on the steering group undertook some training in website design and maintenance (I remember being terrible at it), but it was Mário [Guimarães], whose research related to online communities, who had the expertise to push it forward.¹¹

Were most anthropology journals online then?

Rebecca Marsland

They must have been because JSTOR existed [having been founded in 1995]. But at that stage I remember when I was looking for articles in journals I was going to the SOAS Library and getting the physical copies of the journals and thumbing through them and photocopying them rather than downloading them. So it must have been at a time when people were making the transition to downloading. I got back from fieldwork in 2002. I'm not sure what the timeline would've been. As a consequence of an earlier job, I'd been aware that you could search indexes of journals online. I used to get a literature search. I'd get the list and take that to the library and get the physical copies.

¹¹ Sarah Bilby and Sheila Fish also worked on designing the initial website.

Do you remember there being discussions about the merits of 'open access' at the time, or mention of this at all within the discipline?

Ian Harper

There wasn't really much discussion of this. If anything, our concerns were that because we were attempting to go online and make it open access that we wouldn't be taken seriously. I guess we were ahead of the curve, but it's not how we (or at least I) thought about it at the time. We genuinely wanted to create a space where we, and those at our stages in their careers, could publish and share ideas. I don't think that those of us who wrote and published in the journal were that precious about where we published our first articles. We could always refine ideas developed here for other outlets later.

Jakob Rigi

We had never a discussion about open access. We published online because we hadn't the money for publishing hard copies. Probably, I am mistaken. David Mills, who was indeed an initiator of the seminar and co-facilitated it with Stuart Thompson, probably had the idea about having an open access publication. Currently, I am in support of open access publication and my current research is on commons of knowledge.

James Staples

I don't remember discussion being in quite those terms, although I do remember us recognising the advantage of being able to make our work widely available—without it being kept behind paywalls—both for those who had written it and for our potential readers. There was also a general agreement amongst those involved, I think, that retaining our own copyright of our material was a better model than having to sign it away to a

publisher. It was still relatively early days in online publishing more generally, though (at least that's my recollection!): not everything was published online in quite the way that it has come to be subsequently, and it was still much more common in the late 1990s to read journal articles in hard copy forms in libraries.

From the Archives

The term 'open access' was still quite new in 2002, with the Budapest Open Access Initiative starting that year (BOAI 2002). Although *Anthropology Matters* did not initially recognise itself as an 'open access' journal, the below 'Background History' published in 2002 shows that the internet was articulated as a means to expand free access to conversations around anthropological training.¹²

Background History of the Journal

The *Anthropology Matters* journal grows out of a paper-based journal that has been published since 1999 by students at the School of Oriental and African Studies. That journal has its roots in the student-run anthropology research-training seminar, first supported in 1997 by the National Network for Learning and Teaching Anthropology, the FDTL-funded precursor to C-SAP. The journal was circulated to students and staff within the department and to all other UK anthropology departments. The *Anthropology Matters* Editorial Collective recognised that an on-line journal would be a means of expanding the conversation around research training outwards from SOAS to more effectively involve anthropology departments throughout the United Kingdom and potentially worldwide.

¹² Available [here](#).

When, at the time of AM's founding, were scholars expected to publish their first articles or chapters?

Ian Harper

Well this divided faculty opinion if I remember correctly. There were several who felt strongly that we should wait till we had the PhD, others were a little more encouraging. I guess that we were an example of a group of PhD students ignoring this advice and just getting on with it.

James Staples

In much the same big journals as now, if we could, and although the predecessor of the REF had already started having an impact on how people published, getting chapters in edited volumes seemed to be more valued then than it subsequently became with the REF. The advice I had received (from the late J. D. Y. Peel, who ran our formal weekly doctoral seminar at SOAS) was to try to get something in a standard anthropology journal (like the JRAI or American Ethnologist); something in a well-regarded regional journal; and something in a sub-discipline specific journal (like Medical Anthropology Quarterly). Some suggested that writing book reviews were a good entry point—which, in terms of building up confidence in writing, they probably were in a way similar to publishing in AM. It may be that I wasn't so aware of them, but there didn't seem as many formats around that allowed for the kind of experimentation that AM, as an online journal, offered—whether in terms of alternative formats or in testing out ideas rather than feeling obliged to present them as authoritative statements.

Rebecca Marsland

It was after your PhD. You were almost actively discouraged from publishing during your PhD, although I think all of us [who were involved with Anthropology Matters] did. We didn't just publish in *Anthropology Matters* but I think we also all got a book chapter or a journal

article. But I think the rule of thumb in the department [at SOAS] at that stage was to get your thesis done and then think about publishing. I think I was quite a long way off finishing my thesis when I submitted my first journal article – about a year.

What was the perceived relationship between publishing and jobs post-PhD? What I understood at the time was that it was advisable to get a postdoc pretty quickly and use that time to get published so that you could then get a job. So that was the aim really of getting a postdoc: to get time to publish your PhD work and apply for jobs and get some experience teaching and maybe push your PhD project into something new or finish off some other aspect of it.

How, in your experience, have those expectations changed? Well, I would be more clear to PhD students now that towards the end of their PhD, or shortly after they've finished, that it's a good idea to work on an article for a good journal. And that's simply been because of my own experience in recruiting new lecturers [Rebecca is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Edinburgh]. It very quickly became apparent that one of the most important things was that people had some strong publications that were suited to their stage of their career. You would be very lucky now to get a job if you didn't have a journal article, to be offered a job without any publications at all, even if you were fresh out of your PhD. I think people would feel that they were gambling on you. It doesn't happen very much.

How do you think Early Career Researchers learn how to publish? Partly by taking part in journals like *Anthropology Matters*. I think there are many more PhD-student led journals, there are a lot of them, and in fact there are undergraduate ones too. So I think it's partly that process. I think PhD supervisors are more likely to get involved, to encourage people, although not always. It's a difficult question to answer... I think it's one of those areas where people learn by doing. You seek advice from people whom you trust, you learn by diving off by the deep end. Another way I think people get their first publication out is they've been at a conference and conference panel convenors decides to do a special issue or an

edited book. And that can help guide them through the process because it's a group of people doing it together. So that probably takes some of the fear out of it. In fact, that's how my first journal article came about as well.

What, in your opinion, is academic publishing for – or what should its aims be? There's the instrumental element, which is the REF [Research Excellence Framework] and, to a degree, people get anxious about getting a piece or several pieces ready for the REF. And there's the instrumental element for your career, getting your first job, getting your promotions. At a later stage, publications have a role in showing that when you get a research grant you're actually doing something with that money. But then there's the intellectual aspect of it as well. Which is, I would imagine, what most people find fulfilling about it. The act of writing gets you thinking more deeply about what you're doing. That's what I find most fulfilling about any kind of writing and, again, reading other people's publications. It's taking part in that broader intellectual conversation about generating new ideas, generating new ways of thinking about things. That's the exciting side of it all.

Was Anthropology Matters Journal a peer review journal from the beginning? We did it amongst ourselves. It was a 'snowball' thing: once we got online, that generated more interest from people who wanted to get involved. It by word of mouth. A manuscript would come in and we'd have a chat about it and discuss 'who knows about this?' and then get in touch with them to see if they would read it for us. Usually it was other PhD students rather than faculty.

Was this because PhD students were more available or was that more of an ethical or ideological decision? It was a bit of both. It was partly by necessity in that we didn't get the impression that faculty took it particularly seriously. It was never quite clear if it was just students potentially 'getting a bit above themselves'. But at the same time, by reviewing each other's work we weren't just learning how to publish, we were learning how to review as well – so we were learning all of the elements of academic publishing, really.

How did you pass on your role in Anthropology Matters to someone else? I was doing a postdoc, I'd had a baby, and I realised that to get to the next stage of my career I needed to focus my efforts on applying for jobs and getting my own research publications out. And, of course, editing is an extremely time-consuming job, so it was clear to me that if I wanted to move to the next stage I needed to hand it on to someone else. I think I edited two or three issues of the journal. I remember doing it when my son was about two months old – or basically from when he was born – and I had him in a sling and I remember leaning over him and typing while he slept. That was the only time I could do it – when he was sleeping – and he would only sleep when he was in the sling and on me.

What advice would you give to postgraduate or early career scholars who would like to set up initiatives similar to Anthropology Matters?

Ian Harper

Go for it, but as a collective. Use opportunities such as this to develop team working skills and mitigate against the often hyper-individualised, competitive, and solitary nature of fieldwork. It drew us together. At the same time being involved in an enterprise such as this helped all of our careers, so we all benefitted. Think about the future, beyond just its benefits to yourself as an individual. I was quite gratified recently in a conference where no one had any idea how Anthropology Matters had started, and was clearly so independent of founders and all the issues that can raise.

Managing Anthropology Matters in a way that it could survive, and continue and assist young anthropology scholars was always primary in my mind. A key issue was how can an enterprise set up and run by PhD students sustain itself, when we are a rolling population (in and out of fieldwork, and then leaving). Departments are littered with projects started that then flounder when students move on. This was the hardest thing to grapple with for me. We had always thought beyond just SOAS, and at the time the ASA Postgraduate Network really

existed in little more than name. I had contacted them several times, and was just dismissed and told that that was the ASA's job, with little happening. But I was asked to come and present AM and its activities at a committee meeting.

Now, at SOAS we loved our post-modernist and post-colonial theory, it was almost a badge of identity! And having read actor-network theory, and being deeply into Bruno Latour at the time we had developed a theoretical underpinning as to how we could remain visible and expand. Basically, we thought, if you are a weak force, as Anthropology Matters undoubtedly was, then you need to form alliances with forces that are greater than you are. And you make yourself visible through a process of lending your name and support to others, a form of dispersed power through networks. The ASA was always in our sights as the only real entity through which we should do this. The Royal Anthropological Institute was run too much like a fiefdom for our liking, and was never on the radar. I remember presenting AM to the ASA, theoretical underpinnings and all, to be greeted with a "we don't do theory at the ASA"! Anyway, the outcome was that I was asked if I might be interested in applying for the vacant PG support committee spot and facilitate AM through the ASA, which I did.

At this point, then, we started to approach other universities to ask if we could help. We had a little bit of money (which always helps) and were now officially sanctioned within the ASA. We worked with a postgraduate conference in Oxford for example, and we asked if they would like to publish in AM; and so it went on. It was interesting to see how different the cultures of the various departments were. The LSE, perhaps perceiving themselves as the centre of anthropological thought in the UK, were highly resistant to our suggestions and attempts at working together. It became a standing joke amongst us at SOAS.

It has been wonderful to see AM flourish as it has. The email list we started has grown beyond anything we ever imagined. I now have little to do with it, and I do wonder how the editorship of the journal is handed on, as it is not that clear to me.¹³

¹³ Editors are asked to commit to three to four years' involvement in the journal. When new editors are needed, a call is put out on the Anthropology Matters mailing list and successful applicants are chosen by the current editors. A copy of the most recent call for editors is available [here](#).

Rebecca Marsland

I think it's just doing it... I would be surprised if, for those of us involved near to the beginning, getting an article out in *Anthropology Matters* got any of us a job, but I think taking the initiative and making it happen was a positive thing on our CVs. And, even more importantly, we developed a network and a cohort of peers and we've stayed in touch with most of each other through our academic careers and we've remained friends and let each other know when there've been opportunities. And I think that's one of the most important things you can do towards the end of your PhD, is having a group of people who you can go through the next stages together with. I think there's something to be said for coming up with an idea and turning it into a reality. I think it's good for your confidence, I think it's good for your CV. It's a good practice for the future. It's just a good thing to do.

Saying 'just do it' isn't really advice. I sound like Nike. But, more obviously, it would be a question of talking to people who've already done something similar. Thinking about what skills you already have and sharing skills, other people you know have. We had some of the skills we needed to have already. So acknowledge what you already know. People need money to get things off the ground, so have the confidence to feel what you're doing it potentially worthwhile enough to have a budget to get it moving.

Jakob Rigi

It is a very good idea. Since you have a forum to discuss your own research and become familiar with state of the art in topics relating to your own research interests and beyond.

James Staples

Perhaps to get involved with AM first! Working with others certainly made things more achievable—and working with others was also the point, at least in part—so I'd certainly advise

trying to get together a good group of people with a potentially shared vision before getting started. When we first set up AM we were probably a bit too ambitious—trying to set up a register of interests, an active blog, a journal, a JISC-mail list, regular meetings, and so on—although I don't think any of us could have predicted which of the elements would have worked, so as long as expectations aren't too grueling it might be as well to cast the net widely. Letting in other expertise—particularly in web design—was also vital to make the journal a success. As was, in the new management-speak, 'succession planning': one the thing was up and running it was really important to keep bringing in new people so that those who were there at the start could eventually fade away when the time came...

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