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People Profile: John Cox

Editor

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are evident. Such tribalism becomes a problem when staff in each department identify with their departmental colleagues so closely and exclusively that they begin to see other departments as threats or obstacles or in some way in competition.

What has all this to do with the scholarly information environment? How do organisations work at all if different departments appear to be fighting each other? The first thing to note is that most organisations exhibit similar behavior patterns, whether they are commercial publishing companies, non-profit societies or universities. It is a phenomenon that occurs wherever we look in the scholarly communications chain.

So how do we deal with it? The answer lies in good, visible, management. All of the tribes that I have described have to be managed. Managing tribalism within organisations is not about training or educating staff out of it, because it is too deep-rooted in our natures. Management is concerned with leadership, communication and organisation. It is about planning, influencing and directing behavior constructively, and ensuring that all that talent and tribal aggression is harnessed to the benefit of the organisation as a whole. It is concerned with balancing the need for processes in the organisation with the individual's need for a reasonable level of autonomy. It is also concerned with viewing problems as opportunities that can be solved by collective, creative, multi-disciplinary effort. In a sense it is about keeping chaos at bay!

Creative results are achieved by teams that have faith in each other. Such faith has to be nurtured if tribalism is to be mitigated. Creating and maintaining faith depends on communication, on creating mutual understanding between departments or teams, and on ensuring that each individual, and each team or department, is accountable — to customers (in the broadest sense of the word, including internal “customers”), to colleagues and to the organisation. Communication means that members of different tribes within the organisation discuss matters, solve problems and plan to exploit opportunities together. Consequently, understanding is increased, particularly across departmental boundaries. Communication and understanding leads to joint planning, with each unit agreeing specific targets that are interdependent; if they have been part of the planning process, they are accountable to each other for meeting their responsibilities.

So, how do we spot tribalism? It occurs where staff appear to be separated into competing groups as a result of organisational procedures, or even by perceptions that have not been challenged or corrected, that manifests itself as gossip and speculation. And, when we spot it, how do we combat the threat? Here are a few ideas:

- **Provide leadership.** Everyone needs objectives to meet and boundaries to operate within. We all need rules. So

against the grain people profile

John Cox

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BORN & LIVED: Born in Cleethorpes, UK, and lived in Lincolnshire, on the east coast of England, until I went to university.

EARLY LIFE: Schoolboy! Nothing much happened. I collected stamps and ran my model railway, like most boys in the late 1940s and 1950s. I still remember rationing that had been introduced during World War II. It lasted until 1951.

FAMILY: Father ran the family business, **Ernest Cox**, a fish merchant and fish curer (i.e., manufacturer of smoked fish) in Grimsby, which was the UK's premier fishing port until the 1980s.

EDUCATION: Went to **Brigg Grammar School** in north Lincolnshire, and then to **Brasenose College**, Oxford, where I read law. I qualified as a Barrister in 1969, but I have never practiced.

FIRST JOB: Apart from working for the family business filleting and packing fish during vacations, my first job was academic mailing lists to academic publishers

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: I have been in publishing for thirty eight years mostly academic and scholarly books and journals, but with a spell as a childrens publisher in the 1980s. After working at **The Open University**, **Butterworths** and **Scholastic**, I joined **Blackwell** in 1990 as head of the subscription agency and then as Managing Director. I was Managing Director of **Carfax**, a UK journal publisher, from 1994. When **Carfax** became part of **Taylor & Francis** in 1998 I set up my own consultancy, which specializes in scholarly and research publishing.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Read widely, from crime novels to biographies and history. I have spent twenty five years in consumer affairs in aviation, and was Chair of the UK's **Air Transport Users Council**, which advises government and represents consumer interests to airlines and airports. For that work I was honoured in 1993 with an OBE.

FAVORITE BOOKS: *Michael Collins*, by **Tim Pat Coogan**, and anything by **Pat Barker**, whose novels on World War I the Great War, are breathtaking.

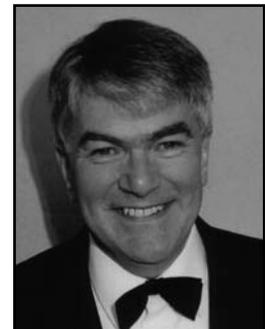
PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD: Ignorance and stupidity! I am constantly amazed by how ignorant people are. They still sound off with their opinions. There are plenty of them in publishing, libraries and the academy and on the listservs. And I don't see why I should suffer fools gladly!

PHILOSOPHY: There is still much to do.

MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Developing **Carfax** as a publisher in the social sciences, and then placing it in the hands of **Taylor & Francis**.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: By then I shall be in my mid-60s, but I still hope to be busy.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: Publishers and libraries will still be grappling with the challenges of the Internet. Little by little things will change, but the ecology of scholarly publishing will still be familiar to us, with a gradual shift to online information delivery. Print will still be important, even in the hard sciences, as it still is now. 🐿



clarify and articulate the objectives and be receptive to any input from colleagues that will improve or clarify them. Ensure that there is clear leadership of any

changes that are necessary. Staff behavior echoes the culture and actions of their managers. If you don't put their day-to-

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