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Editorial

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EDITORIAL - Volume 1

This is the first volume of the *International Journal of Community Currency Research*. Our aim in setting up this

new journal is to provide a forum for the dissemination of knowledge and understanding about the emerging array of community currencies being used throughout the world both at present and in the past.

Community currencies are here defined widely to encompass the full range of possible currency systems. Our desire is to facilitate analysis not only of those systems currently in use, including the 'money-based' systems such as LETS, time-based systems such as time-dollars and Ithaca hours, other scrip-based community exchanges as well as business trade exchanges, but also to provide an arena in which the historical use of community currencies can be explored.

Articles which provide an informed theoretical perspective as well as empirical investigations of community currency systems are encouraged. We welcome contributions which explore both the historical and contemporary uses of such currencies. Up until now, there has been far too little analysis of the use of community currencies historically. The result is a poverty of information available for contemporary systems to learn lessons from the past. Indeed, most of the community currencies operating at present have very short histories. Whilst 'business barter' and 'trade exchanges' have been expanding since the 1970s, other more local and person-centred systems such as LETS, Hours and time-dollars have only emerged during the past decade or so, particularly in North America, Australia, New Zealand and, in the last few years, the UK and other European nations.

Other than publicity pieces in the popular media, it is difficult to find articles of a theoretical nature on the more established world of the business trade exchange (BTE). In any case the communication gap between the profit-driven, professional and relatively secretive BTEs, and the more open, community-oriented and (in comparison) lay community currency practitioner is only slightly broader than the town-gown gap between the 'activist' and the 'academic'. Hence this journal. We seek to bridge these gaps in knowledge, practice and communication. Not only have there been few empirical studies of such systems but neither has there been much attempt to theorise them. We seek to provide a common forum for informed articulation and debate of empirical, critical and theoretical research on community currencies.

To a major extent, this project of launching a new journal is dependent upon its readers and contributors for its success. We believe, however, that the rapid expansion of interest in community currencies throughout the world is sufficient reason to justify its launch in this relatively inexpensive, broadly accessible medium. To establish a new hard copy journal requires many hours of work and large amounts of 'hard' currency and then similar expenditures in finding and distributing to a 'market'. 'Printing' and 'distributing' on the net is far and away the more attractive option when given the comparatively limited yet earnest 'market' on offer.

Given the ephemeral nature of 'soft' (only in terms of not being able to hold a bound version) literature such as this its success is all the more dependent upon your active involvement. We would thus welcome discussion and feedback on any of the articles included either in this first volume or subsequent volumes. One of the benefits of using the electronic-journal format is that debate and discussion on what is published in the journal can take place at a speed which is unachievable in the conventional hard copy arrangement of traditional journals. We thus encourage you to enter into a discourse with the authors and others who have read the piece so that knowledge can be furthered.

Private discussions with the authors are of course possible through normal email networks (presuming the author wishes to engage with your queries or points). There is however another possibility as we have established a listserver to meet the needs of a readership who wish to discuss their thoughts on IJCCR articles in a public forum.

The first few volumes of this journal, it must be stated, will be pilots. Whether we continue to use our energies to publish the journal will be dependent upon the feedback we get from readers about its usefulness. We thus encourage you to inform us whether you are reading it and finding it useful. Unless this is done, we will not know either whether it is reaching anybody, its value to you or how it can be improved. So, please feel free to air your views and to submit either articles, reports on conferences and meetings, news of forthcoming events or book reviews to the editors.

We hope you enjoy this first volume and look forward to some more lively interaction!