The Issue of a Journal

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Guests
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Introduction
Academic journals are an integral element of how we share knowledge of new discoveries, practices, and ideas. But how do these journals get started, what kinds of difficulties do they face and why do we need new ones? In this month's episode of Finally Friday, our guest speakers discuss their experiences in founding new academic journals. **Martina Revello Lami** is an archaeologist and guest researcher at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands. Her research has recently expanded to begin exploring the complex relationship between archaeology and society. This is a core aspect of the *Ex Novo Journal of Archaeology.* **Luca Bartoni** specialises in IT but has always been interested in History and Culture. He began his venture into living history in 2002 and is currently the president of *Archeologia, Reenacment e Storia (AReS)*. Luca is also a Journal Manager of the digital journal *Archeologie Sperimentali. Temi, Metodi, Ricerche.*

Transcript
Phoebe: Hello and welcome to #FinallyFriday. This chat session is run by EXARC, the society for archaeological open-air museums, experimental archaeology, ancient technology and interpretation. My name is Phoebe Baker and today I'm joined by two specialists from our EXARC community, focusing on starting a journal. Martina Revello Lami is an archaeologist and guest researcher at the university of Leiden in the Netherlands. Although mainly focusing on how human choice can be expressed in ceramic objects, Martina's research has recently expanded to begin exploring the complex relationship between archaeology and society. This is a core aspect of the Ex Novo Journal of Archaeology of which she is vice-director, co-founder and editor. Ex Novo is an open

access and peer-reviewed international journal founded in 2005, which encourages interdisciplinary research and encompasses pre-history to the modern period. Luca Bartoni specializes in IT, but has always been interested in history and culture. He began his venture into living history in 2002 and is currently the president of Archeologia, Reenactment e Storia. As well as this, Luca is a general manager of the digital journal, Archeologie Sperimentali, Temi, Metodi, Ricerche, which published its first issue in 2020. Archeologie Sperimentali is the first journal in Italy focusing specifically on experimental archaeology and aims to strengthen methodological debate and multidisciplinary research in this area. So welcome to both of you and thank you so much for joining me. I have a quick question to start you both off. Starting a journal is not an experience that many people get to have. So how did you first become involved in setting up journals?

Martina: Hi Phoebe, thank you for inviting us over and I'm also speaking on behalf of my colleagues at Ex Novo. Maja Gori, Alessandro Pintucci, the three of us, we are, let's say, the oldest founders and editors of the journal. Now we have two new members, Marianna Fusco and Jesús Gárcia Sánchez. I'm very happy to mention them, first because the family is expanding and then because we hope of course also to expand the network and the readers in this way. So you just asked how I started my adventure with Ex Novo? Well, it all started with Alessandro and Maja, it dates back to 2005 when we were at the university. And, in that moment, we felt like there was a deep disconnection between our subject, between our discipline, so what we were studying and the present world, the contemporary society. I think this is even more evident in Italy because we tend - and by we I mean the academia - tends to live in a sort of ivory tower or a golden isolation. So archaeology, back in the 2000s but also now, it is somehow perceived as a very distant discipline that doesn't really have so much to do with the present. It actually is more involved with the past and, perhaps, modern history. So we perceived this type of disconnection as first a problem for the discipline per se, for archaeology, but also a lost opportunity for us as researchers and archaeologists in general, because that cuts you off from any political debate, from anything that has to do with modern day issues. And so this was basically what started us off and now we have to fast forward to 2016 when we actually gave birth materially to the journal, because in 2005, we had a sort of pilot. We also drafted a first issue, but that was just an internal, let's say, manifesto. I would really call that edition of 2005 a manifesto. Then everything kind of slightly faded away. We were of course involved in our own lives and works and so on. And then, yeah, fast forward to 2016. We simply resumed the work. And that first issue, the internal manifesto was the appendix of our first issue in 2016. So the same [instances] that we brought forward in 2005 were actually still valid in 2016. It says something about archaeology I believe, or maybe archaeology in Italy.

Phoebe: Luca, how did you also become involved in setting up your journal?

Luca: Yes, it was a dream for us when we started practicing experimental archaeology, in our association, we joined after a while the EXARC network. And we see how much is important for the academic debate [on] the experiments of this discipline. But we found also that there exists a gap probably what we identified in Italy, where there's something to be put down as experimental archaeology, something different, something scientific from, for example, reenactment or from divulgations. So we would like to fill that gap and try to create a sort of debate, using this journal, a scientific journal, to start applying a methodology on this. Thanks to the university of Torino that became a reality and thanks to our project leader, Chiara Lebole. I would like also to mention my co-workers in this journey that are Lara Comis, Marco Pitone, Valeria Cobianchi, Giorgio Di Gangi and Yuri Godino. Thanks to this team that is very, very passionate. This kind of challenge that because for us was the first experience in Journal creation and management, that became a reality and was not easy of course, because a new scientific journal [that is born] and doesn't have this kind of visibility to obtain a lot of articles from professors or researchers. So what we did in the past is to involve in our scientific committee important persons, important professors that can give more

visibility to the journal and thanks to them we had, in the first issue, an important number of articles. Now that the first issue was released in 2020 it is now more easy to have more articles because people have noticed the importance of this kind of divulgation. And in particular it's a scientific journal that's in double peer review, blind peer review, so it's growing the interest from the academics in Italy.

Phoebe: Thank you, Luca. You've mentioned in your answer about some of the difficulties in setting up a journal, so would you say it's quite difficult to become seen as a serious journal and to attract submissions for that first issue?

Luca: Yes, it is. Something that is important to pay attention to of course is the content of the articles, is the double blind peer review is another very important stuff. Of course is important as I mentioned before, the scientific committee, because that give us a sort of authoritative vision on this kind of arguments. The president of the scientific committee is Vincent Serneels, for example.

Martina: May I add something to what Luca just said? Well, of course anything that starts from scratch, just like Ex Novo or Archeologie Sperimentali will have hardship at the beginning because you are not known. And we all know that academic publishing is dictated and dominated by the scary indexing. So if you don't exist since some time you don't exist at all. But I guess that in this sense, it might seem cheesy, but the union makes us a bit stronger. So having a valid editorial board, as Luca mentioned, is key here. So of course everyone of us has quite some network, but adding to each and every one of us network other people will multiply that. And I have to admit, I was surprised in the second issue, because the first issue was kind of a pilot for us. So we decided to go a bit safer and we used one panel that, [with Maja], organized a conference. So the first issue was really a warming up and in that very issue we immediately understood what the workload would be, how difficult it is to follow every single step from production to publishing. But after the first issue it was not...absolutely not difficult to receive submissions. On the opposite, we sometimes had to, sadly, reject some. So I think there is...even if archaeological journals, heritage journals, are several [numerous] and probably better indexed than very young ones, there's so much search for research output that it's never redundant. So I would encourage everyone that is planning to venture in this crazy thing to just do it because even if it seems like it's just sort of a redundant topic, the one that you will be choosing for your journal is not, because the venues are multiple, but not as open and accessible as we wish.

Luca: Yes, this is a very important topic, I think also, to be open and accessible for everyone in particular because for us it is very important that knowledge is shared as much as possible. Only in that way we can create value in experimental archaeology, focusing on this topic as a scientific approach. If an experiment is done by someone somewhere in the world, it's important that it is shared, also the method is shared because in that way some other people can try the same and produce information and collaborate to confirm or not this value that came from the first experiment. That should be something that has to be as much as we can open and freely accessible for everyone. What do you think?

Martina: Well, accessibility and openness for journals in general are key of course. It's a huge, huge topic for experimental archaeology in particular, because of course there has been some delay in formalizing the protocols for experimental archaeology. And then of course the accessibility and visibility of the data and the work behind has been limited so far. So of course, if a journal like yours will provide a database, for instance, with all the experiments accessible, just like platforms such as EXARC, of course, that will be already a great contribution to the discipline. For Ex Novo I would have never imagined to say that, but yes, we are a more traditional journal. We talk archaeology, we talk theory, but, and actually what we fear is, you know, a collection of articles,

they're basically presenting raw data without commenting on them. So we try to invite reflection and some more work on the theoretical framework. But the freedom as editors that we have, of choosing the topics to be addressed, giving guidelines and asking researchers and scholars and professionals of all disciplines to reflect upon specific topics, it's just priceless. So that's definitely a plus working in a journal that you shape a bit, as you like, and also the freedom of choosing the medium. So we don't have just a paper version of the journal. We are freely downloadable from our website, from the website of our publisher. But we are also experimenting with other channels, YouTube channels, graphic novels, live interviews, possibilities are endless!

Luca: It's really interesting the channels that you mentioned before, using also other multimedia methods and channels to share information.

Martina: I think for experimental archaeology and for your journal Archeologie Sperimentali, it is pivotal, you really have to diversify, I think. And everything now can be used as a research output. I don't know whether this, we will regret this in the future because, well, the quality check sometimes might be less thorough than a blind review as we do also in Ex Novo. But I think it's simply another way of communicating and as long as the process that you are describing is sound, if there is a protocol, I guess that the medium can change.

Luca: In our journal, because is everything digital, so we permit videos, photos, and so on. But what is really interesting, I guess, is something to create in real time, some things to stream live, using this kind of channel to communicate more.

Martina: Clearly Phoebe, we are all based in Italy. I don't know, what the "behind the scenes" was for you, Luca, but with Ex Novo one of the difficulties that we encountered beside the nightmare of not having [enough] submissions was to formally register and file the request to be a journal, because we decided to base the journal in Italy, which of course means some sort of bureaucratic nightmare. To get the formalization as a journal, a periodical, publication, you need to take a few administrative steps, a few formal steps, that involve the enrollment in the public registry, go to a notary, go to court sometimes. We were absolutely not ready to face that, for us that was the real nightmare, the real journey. We managed and once again, being more than one person helps, but you have to do your homework. You really have to do your homework and understand how does it work, whether it's needed for instance to have a physical base, a legal acknowledgement of the existence of your journal. At that time it was, because we needed to have an ISSN number. And then as soon as you start over with the open access, you need to face the fact that you will need a DUI number. So all these technicalities frustrate a bit the empathy, the enthusiasm that you can have at the beginning, but once you figure them out, it's okay.

Luca: Yes. It's something that, of course, limited our dreams before, because it is a huge amount of bureaucracy to accomplish. It's also an economic phase that is not easy to accept. So in that way, what helped us to obtain an ISSN number and to be released in the directories, become a real formalized journal, was the university of Torino that helped us with all this bureaucracy. And we created and obtained through the university of Torino this kind of formalization and also the ISSN number and directory listing. Because otherwise, it's very, very, very hard to achieve that.

Martina: We decided not to have the journal affiliated to any of our Alma Maters. I don't even remember why but I guess we kind of felt like we needed to have an independent project. That would have probably eased a bit our first foray into publishing. But, I remember that one of the big help and support was the fact that one of us had previous experience in publishing.That was very, very helpful to go through and survive the paperwork. It's important to have had experience in publishing, not as an author, but really on the technical side.

Luca: Yes. The technical side is quite important also from my point of view in particular. We have in our team Valeria Cobianchi who is very, very focused and expertized in the editorial side of the journal and helped us a lot working on all these technicalities related in particular to the format of the journal and to keep it as much as professional as we can.

Phoebe: So it's more on the technical side but not necessarily integral to it, though very helpful.

Martina: Yes, it's like having a very solid base at the beginning, so you know what you're facing, but it's not one of those needed requirements. Sometimes being completely blindfolded, it's better to jump off a cliff!

Phoebe: Oh, that's a good point. I see where you're coming from. And you mentioned earlier, you were talking about outreach and accessibility, but you were..., Luca, you mentioned how you have videos and interactive content within some of your journal articles. I was wondering for people who are not necessarily able to pay for journal access or affiliated to organizations that might be able to give them that access, how do you think we can start to make journals more accessible?

Luca: We have a Facebook page and our website and also our institutional website inside of OJS at the university of Torino and all three of course are free access without any kind of restriction, you can go there and download the full journal or the single articles directly. And we aim also to upload in academia.com the articles from our journal. So it is something that we open wide, sharing, with everybody that wants to download it.

Martina: And I can definitely praise the additional value of having a Facebook page. It's amazing. It's still one of the first hits when you look for something on Google or anything else. So of course that's expanding the visibility enormously. It is immediate. We also have our Twitter account and then of course, yes, the blog, but our blog is in the website so you have to reach [out] and to know the website. So basically we use also Facebook and Twitter as teasers when we have something new on the blog. That's definitely the first channel for reaching the widest public.

Phoebe: So there's quite a few different channels that you can go through. That sounds really positive.

Martina: It depends on your technological era of course. For me Instagram is still a bit new, it's like another chore that I have to attend but yes, we could also use that and Twitch, for instance, it's super instead of YouTube, but I'm, again, old-fashioned, so we decided to start off some interviews, and post them on YouTube, but of course the options are endless and the possibilities also.

Luca: It's very interesting that YouTube usage, let's say..., using like a sort of TV show with interviews and sharing more content besides the article.

Martina: Yes, also because the attention span of everyone of us is different now. So, it depends on what type of information you want to convey. It depends on how much interaction you want to have with your audience and clearly, scientific journals shouldn't shy away from using this other type of outreach, because it's not diminishing the intense and painstaking work that you're doing for publishing our articles. It's just a different way of communicating and reaching out, which once again, this goes back to the first reason why we decided to embark in Ex Novo. Archaeology has not been always that accessible in this sense, especially for complex topics and issues that seemed to be relegated to one specific type of audience, specialists and then for the larger audience, just other kind of superficial topics and subjects. We can use different channels for different topics.

Phoebe: That's a really good way of making it more interactive and engaging, I guess.

Luca: Multimedia is something that attracts attention very, very easily. So it's easier to engage people.

Phoebe: Have you ever struggled with engagement at all?

Luca: For the engagement of contributors just in the first issue, now is something that is going very much easier. Meanwhile for the public is something that is not so hard. The interest in the journal was very high from the beginning. People that was really curious about was a lot of people. So we aim to have more and more downloads in next issues, but of course it is something that we have to play with always, because engagement of new persons is always important.

Martina: I think it depends a bit on the audience you're targeting, that's fundamental. So of course you will balance out the communication to the audience you're targeting. So we definitely had a lot of interaction with colleagues, authors, researchers. I still remember one or two topics that we addressed in the blog had I don't know how many comments, because those topics were so much close to probably our core audience, so other archaeologists, that we started a sort of debate, a thread of comments on the blog. But then again, that is a pretty static way of engaging, right? Because you read a blog, you write a comment, you go away... I think sometimes because we are all overworked, we tend to forget maybe to summarize the results. So we should have probably resumed a bit and maybe summarized the main results or maybe kept going the debate. So all those topics of course can spark a debate that might take a more formal format. So it might be just an entire issue or it can just be a quick reply and comment on Twitter. In any case I think it adds up to at least our awareness as scholars, researchers and archaeologists in general, specialists, non-specialists. And if the core business of the journal is to raise awareness, then it's okay, then it's a good output also that.

Phoebe: Thank you. Are there other issues at the moment in academic publishing that affect how you work?

Martina: Oh, well, yes, I have a long list, this is actually opening a can of worms. I probably briefly already touched upon the indexing and existing or not existing in academia if your name doesn't get cited. So, to enter in this system any journal needs to be recognized and acknowledged by specific platforms that rate you, just as you would do in Yelp or TripAdvisor. So depending on how many times the journal has been cited, then the index, the rating will grow. And then if your index is growing, of course, also the index of authors publishing in the journal will grow. The problem is of course that not all journals are like Archeologie Sperimentali or Ex Novo, completely free. We have a very good deal with our publisher, Archaeopress, so we can publish entirely for free our journal open access through their website. So there are no fees for us, nor for our authors. But this is absolutely not the norm. The norm in scientific publishing is to apply a fee on authors, it's called the APC, so the Authors [Processing] Charge. So if you think that every single author should pay an amount of money to publish his/her own research, then of course you already know that some researchers, self-funded or, well, less funded than others won't have access to journals and even worse won't have access to the most prestigious journals, the ones that have a very high index. So this is a system that definitely cannot be called open access, although that's the name and it is a huge topic in publishing. There have been many different initiatives trying to rebalance all the power of few publishing companies on knowledge dissemination, because that's what happens. But I think there is still a long way to go to have a completely free knowledge dissemination. There have been, as I said, different initiatives to allow more people to access free publishing. I think that is the way forward. But this is of course also creating a problem to the publishing system. So I'm not aiming to have everything for free for everyone because I know, hey, this has also worked for many people.

Luca: Yes, in our case, always thanks to the framework given to us by the university of Torino, for us it is a little bit easier because for us is the publisher is [...], you know. And so for us it is important to just to scale up the ranking of the journal to reach a higher level but we are too young yet, and we need to pass some more time before doing that.

Martina: Still the fact that everyone is aiming at opening as much as possible research [is positive]... that's what also 'cOAlition S', which is one of those visionary movements that wanted to have a real immediate access to research and try to start publishing without fees for authors. But it depends on the circumstances of course, and it is still a complex endeavour for anyone involved in research. I think that the possibility of diversifying the output, always thinking to the citation index, it may help to overcome the problem of indexes because the more platforms also are included in the citation index, the more options there will be to, let's say, be visible, also for smaller, minor journals and for probably early career researchers.

Phoebe: It sounds like a lot of different directions we can go in the future to improve on those issues. Thank you, Martina. And thank you both for such an interesting discussion. I just have one final question before we open this up to our listeners, which kind of touches on what you were saying, Martina, and asks what are your plans for the future and how can the EXARC community help to make a difference in regards to the points that you've discussed today?

Luca: For us EXARC was everything, was the beginning of our journey, was the network where every [one] of us meet and for us is a huge help that EXARC can do is doing what it is already doing now because it's doing brilliantly. So keeping all this experience from Europe united in one network and have the possibility to have the contacts inside the network and sharing experiences through the events and so on for us is the biggest help that EXARC can give us. We are really happy to be a member of this network.

Phoebe: A wonderful response. Martina?

Martina: I totally agree with Luca of course. EXARC is already, I wouldn't say experiment because first - it's pun intended - but no, it's not an experiment anymore. It's an established reality. So I would say that the fact that you are using also different outputs, it definitely reinforces the ties between different specialisms, different places of course and different stages of career for your audience. So, yeah, definitely keep it going as you are and, yeah, maybe cross boundaries more often. So the fact that you invited a journal like Ex Novo that is way more theoretical than the practical philosophy of EXARC, I think, it's one great way to start mixing it up and of course multiply the audience and the possibilities for both... on both sides.

Phoebe: Thank you for agreeing to join us. It's been such a wonderful discussion.

Phoebe: We will now be having a live question and answer session with people who've been listening into the discussion so far. We already have our first question from Roeland who asks: You can see the success of a journal in different ways. Having a technically sound publication, a good number of articles from different people, a good number of people reading it or good comments from colleagues. When are the editors happy and what is the part they like to develop in the near future? Martina?

Martina: First of all, before answering Roeland's question, I need to specify one thing. I forgot one for our editors when I was presenting all the bunch from Ex Novo, Maurizio Crudo. So all my apologies to Maurizio, he's also worked with us since two years. Coming back to Roeland's question. So what is the factor that signals the success of a journal? Well, there are multiple factors

in a way. Definitely there is one part that relates to the audience, so how many readers you have and with a completely open access journal, of course you can keep track of that through the analytics. So how many people download it or read it or simply clicked or posted or cited one or more of our articles. And then of course there is also the contributors/authors' index of, let's say, a positive feedback, which usually comes in the form of either a request, a proposal to collaborate. The last two issues of Ex Novo had two guest editors. So basically other colleagues picked and selected Ex Novo as their output for research and a specific topic to be discussed. And then of course also an acknowledgement from other parties. And that would be for instance our publisher, Archaeopress, which decided to host us within their editorial offer. There are different possibilities to read a positive feedback. One that I think counts very much, [besides] how many proposals we receive every year or every month to contribute to the journal, is for instance how fast people act and colleagues answer to our request of reviewing a paper. So as soon as you approach a colleague and the reply is immediate, then you know that they know the journal, then you know that they know your work and the way you work.

Luca: I totally agree with Martina and, for sure, the main, let me say KPI, that gives a measurable success of a journal for sure are readers, number of readers and contributions. More contributors, more high quality articles and more readers of course, because the journal becomes more and more interesting. This of course is the two main points that give us the real feedback of the journal that is going good because otherwise what I thought about feedback, we receive a lot of positive feedback [of course] but it's not something that is really measurable, because you receive positive feedback only and you don't probably receive bad feedback because they don't tell to you. So the real measurable stuff is the number of downloads of the articles from our websites. And of course, the number of articles that we receive in our issues.

Phoebe: Thank you, so there's quite a few different ways. I hadn't really thought about how feedback influences your... measure of success and actually Roeland asked another question kind of linked to this: Could you say something about your contact with your readers?

Martina: Well, the contact with our readers usually happens through either our networking channels, so personal emailing or just working with other researchers and scholars, but a very powerful way of getting an immediate sense of how much an issue has been appreciated or not, comes from the blog because the blog allows for comments. And also through the old-fashioned Facebook and Twitter page, because the possibility of immediate messaging allows you to get such an instant reaction and answer and question exchange.

Phoebe: Thank you. Luca, do you have anything to add?

Luca: Yes, to have more engagement from our readers we noticed that the most powerful stuff are socials, because as Martina said there exists in socials an interaction with comments and we noticed that using these kind of tools the engagement is higher. We use also mailing list, but, yes, mail lists is not a synchronous communication, is asynchronous communication, so one direction only, while with socials exists more engagement, the communication is faster and [you can] reach out to more people. Very easy.

Phoebe: Thank you. For our next question, this is quite a long question and there's two parts to it. So I'll read the whole thing out. It's from Caroline. So it says: A lot has been said about how print media, at least in terms of newspapers and magazines, are 'dying' - in part of the way that the internet has come into being and has developed over the recent decades. What impact do you think

this sort of cultural shift has had on how your journals have come into being and were developed? What directions do you imagine taking as research becomes more open, more digitized, and more participatory?

Luca: We [were] born as a digital journal and so we are really focused on this kind of sharing, because we permit multimedia also, videos, audio and a lot of photos. Videos and audio, of course, in a paper modality is not possible. But at the same time, we are wondering if, at a certain point, we can collect maybe some issues of the journal and make a version in paper to have the version of paper on the hand, is a different story of course.

Martina: Yes, I agree, the hard copies always give you that sense of achievement that sometimes the digital format doesn't, but I have to admit that, without the possibility of starting off completely online, so without the possibility of going public through internet, I don't think that Ex Novo would have had the story that it actually has. As I told you, at the beginning in 2005, it was supposed to be a traditional paper [print] journal. And you saw how that went for Ex Novo in 2005, 2006. We simply waited and put it on hold. So the options we have now being all born digital, or at least probably Luca - I'm less of a native digital - the possibilities that the revolution of open access offer us are huge and a great opportunity in any case. Definitely there is an impact in the way I think we consult and we read and we study and we consult books. Scrolling is not leafing through a book. And yes, probably the way the attention we pay to what we read, it's slightly different because we can simply have ten pages open at the same time instead of two, three books. But this is a too wide topic. I would focus on the positive sides here, which is that without having a physical journal it is easier to reach people. It is definitely easier to get in almost every library, in almost every university, no matter what the funding of those libraries or university are. So once again, the potential is there.

Phoebe: Luca, you actually have a specialism in IT I believe? Do you think that this has helped when you'd been setting up and disseminating your online journal?

Luca: Yes, it's something of course [that] helped sharing as much as we can, using all the technology that we can provide and use. And in that way I can give my my real help on the journal side, because of course my experience and all my knowledge are related to IT. So this is my effort giving more visibility to the journal.

Phoebe: Thanks. A further question from the audience is from Caroline as well asking: What changes do you wish could be made to the existing indexing system, which theoretically should allow for authors to benefit from measuring the impact of their work, but in practice has turned into a standalone metric for the quality of their work, used for assessing a person's proposed funding for grants, ranking for jobs, eligibility for tenure, and so forth?

Martina: Well, that's the one-million-dollar question... I think that the indexing system is born indeed to... in a way evaluate the impact of the research of any scientist, right? Too bad that the system at the end got some sort of doped by the fact that the venues in which you can publish are many, but the more visible ones are a few and the more visible ones know that, therefore you can make the price. The big publishers will ask you a specific price to be more visible, which is basically, in a nutshell, the same concept of boosting a post on Facebook. And also there should be more transparency in how the funding of university actually works towards that type of publication. So how much money actually you have as a researcher within a university to publish and what channels you have available for it, because once again a very wealthy university and institution will allow you probably to access one of those golden channels that gives you more visibility. So as soon as we try to rebalance the difference between the publication channels, the more possibility we have to have a more democratic system of indexing, if you want to keep that system as it is.

Luca: Yes, it's something that actually we can achieve of course from an economic aspect. But, yes, there's more democracy, let me say, on public access directory listing where everybody can access. And of course we aim to scale up the ranking of the journal to have more visibility, in an organic way. Because otherwise, yes, as Martina shared, it's like boosting something using a Facebook approach.

Phoebe: Thank you both. Another question from our audience, this is from Heather: Do you find that being an online and accessible journal results in more engagement from non-traditional sources in terms of contributors and readers, for example independent researchers?

Martina: Definitely that was also one of the main points of establishing an open access journal. So definitely yes, and having diversified the publication output, we mentioned already the blog, YouTube channel, that allows us to interact with non-specialists and also different specialists - not just archaeologists - way more.

Luca: For us was important also the possibility to share our call of papers with others, academics and universities, and in that way different kind of people from researchers to... not researchers but interested ones can be engaged to write something and be reviewed.

Phoebe: Thank you both. So this is a question from me now. I was just wondering, what has been your favorite part about setting up a journal so far?

Martina: The freedom of deciding the title, the name, the vision, the concept. Also the graphic of the website and also seeing this small creature growing up. So now we are in our teenagerhood, I guess, and soon to be indexed in Scopus. It's just the process of seeing something that starts very little becoming an adult and a mature person.

Luca: The most satisfying part was after the first issue, I noticed that more people started engaging with us. So it seems that we are reaching our first aim, that is [to] start again the debate related to methods and approaches on experimental archaeology. That was really satisfying from my point of view.

Phoebe: That sounds really satisfying.

Martina: If I may add just another super rewarding feeling is also the amount of reading that you have to do as one of the editors and so the incredible learning...steep learning curve that you will have to go through, because of course all the submissions that we receive touch upon different topics and the first round of revision is of course internal. So you really learn..., you really have sort of a second degree in many other topics. That's definitely very much enriching.

Phoebe: I can imagine. We have another question from our audience, which is kind of connected to what I just asked, saying: what is the biggest thing that you would do differently if you were to start from scratch now and why?

Luca: I think that the editorial side can be done in an easier way, sharing more details with the contributors on how should be edited an article, because we worked really lot to fix up all the editorial issues and [it] was very huge amount of work. Probably this step can be shared better with contributors. Yes, that is a real lesson learned.

Martina: As for Ex Novo, I would say maybe, maybe now in 2021 I would not go for the formalization to the public registry for the journal, because indeed it doesn't impact so much the whole feedback system and the indexing system at the end. And then probably I think maybe a

good idea would be to try out right away one of the many editorial manager platforms that are available online. So - this is a very technical part - because they really grant you full support in dealing with all the peer review process and the submission process. So you can keep track of whatever has been submitted, when sending reminders to the reviewer, looking for reviewers. Now of course we are doing that independently through our email and from time [to time], well, things tend to get buried under other millions of emails, so that can cause some delay and mishaps. So I would advise to browse the possibility to rely upon from the beginning an editorial manager platform.

Phoebe: They're both really interesting points. We've just got a couple more questions now, we have another one from Roeland asking: Do you need to get fresh people in your editorial board every now and then? And if so, how do you get them?

Luca: Of course, reviewers are always more than welcome because when there's a lot of articles we need a lot of reviewers. So this is something [of] an open position, if someone can give us help to act as reviewer. And also for other editorials side, we are fully accomplishing all the tasks and the most important one is the reviewers, actually. So how can we engage with these people? We ask usually to our scientific committee if they have someone to propose as reviewer. Usually we do that.

Martina: Yes, fresh people, meaning fresh meat... to use in the long time we have during our editorial year! By editorial board I mean really the people that will give birth to the issue, so the editors. And for the first three years we've been working just the founders, just us, of course relying on our advisory board. But of course all the technicalities and practicalities and the actual peer review process was tackled just by us. And at the third year we were exhausted. So, yes, we decided to expand as I said the editorial board, which is in any case a good thing to do because it inevitably brings some different inspirations, networks and possible contacts. We expanded the board by simply publishing an open call. We really needed to have specific help in a couple of sectors, dealing with social media, for instance, the web design. So we drafted a call for these two positions and we simply interviewed people, I mean the ones that sent us their CV. And then in the second stage, we simply approached colleagues that were working with us on other fronts or they worked with us at Ex Novo and we proposed them to work with us. So at the moment we are now six and still we have a lot on our plate, even though the editorial board doubled. So definitely for anyone who wants to venture in publishing, every couple of years, two, three years, I think, editors should circulate or at least expand a bit just to have some more inspiration and enthusiasm of course.

Phoebe: Thank you both so much. Thank you, Martina and Luca for joining us today and thank you for sharing your experience and expertise. I know that I've certainly learned a lot and I'm sure that our listeners did too. Thank you to everyone for listening into this episode of #FinallyFriday by EXARC. If you would like to become more involved in EXARC, why not become a member? Alternatively, you can make a small PayPal donation through the website to help support EXARC in its endeavors. See you next month for another episode of #FinallyFriday.