

From the Editor

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Folklore Forum was always meant to be a working papers series. In 1964 the Folklore Institute at Indiana University opened its own publishing outlet called, appropriately, the *Journal of the Folklore Institute*. Under its current name, the *Journal of Folklore Research* continues to serve as an important outlet for scholarly communication in the discipline. But it was not long before students at the Institute became disgruntled with the priorities and plodding pace of their new journal. It seemed just one more place for student submissions to be rejected. These students not only wanted publication outlets; they wanted information about their nascent academic field, and they wanted it quickly. With cheap photocopying technology available, three students decided to put together a few of their thoughts, reactions, reviews, and reports into an independent, student-run publication. The goals of the new *Forum* were focused on students, speed, and innovation rather than prestigious scholars and careful editing. It was to be distributed six times a year, by students, for students.

It wasn't long before *Forum* attracted the attention of the faculty at the Institute, as well as alumni working all over the country. Some of the most accomplished folklorists of the last fifty years have made contributions to the journal alongside the most novice students, and at the same time, they helped sell the journal to their own departments and to academic and public libraries all over the world. Subscribers began asking for thematic issues and opportunities to collect longer and more thoughtful pieces. The volume and quality of the demand forced the editors to incorporate into a regular not-for-profit business and edit in earnest. They were joined later by a publications group interested in reprinting books and articles already accepted at other presses. In 1979 they also developed Trickster Press, a popular book imprint that works to distribute classroom resources and classic Folklore texts.

All of this business took its toll on keeping up with a timely, quality journal run entirely by student volunteers. Publication schedules for *Forum* shrank from six to four, then three, then just twice a year. Prices also rose to keep up with the costs of printing a

professional journal. Time and money constraints cut down on the timeliness of the journal as well as its focus as a student-led publishing outlet. For example, by the time an accepted article made it into an issue, the author may have already moved into his/her professional career, denting the impact that the work could have had were it to have been in print earlier.

This inaugural online issue of *Forum* is designed in content and format to hark back to our roots from 35 years ago even as we plan for the future. The initial format of the cheaply distributed photocopy has its successor in the free multi-media space of the World Wide Web. We have duplicated a number of articles from the original 1968 publication, including Elliott Oring's bold statement of intent for *Forum*. Also included are Richard Dorson's musings on the state of the field, and a student response to the then salient debate of Folklore as Art or as Science. We have also included working papers from current students at the Folklore Institute that illustrate the scope of some of our own salient debates: the place of public and private commemoration, the poetics of African verbal art, the globalization of world foodways. Space is included on this site for comments, and we eagerly await them, both to improve our writing and to enrich our experience of the field. We hope that this new format will enable us to reach our intended student audience faster, cheaper, and better than before.