

EDITORIAL

I always hope that my editorials will stimulate some response from readers, whether to support, supplement or dispute my arguments. I welcome Vernon Kisling's letter (below, pp. 24–25) on all three counts: he agrees with the view expressed in my last editorial [IZN 56 (8), 450] that there is a need for a comprehensive public collection of zoo literature; his long-time experience as both a zoo historian and an academic librarian enables him to explain some of the technical details of such a project, which I in my ignorance was unqualified to assess; his final conclusion, though, is the depressing one that 'there are a lot of problems and reasons why such a repository of zoo publications has not materialized,' and that 'what the solution might be . . . is yet to be determined.'

Ken Kawata's article (below, pp. 4–12) is not a response to the editorial, having been submitted before it was published or even written. It is, though, highly relevant to my theme in several respects. First, Ken draws attention to the amount of zoo material being published in languages other than English – a complication I failed to mention in my editorial. Leaving aside any national prejudices or preferences, it has to be admitted that English is – and will almost certainly remain – the *de facto* international language, so creating a truly comprehensive archive of zoo literature would have to involve translating an enormous amount of material – not just from relatively well-known languages like German and French, but also from Dutch, Russian, Japanese and many others. Just think, for example, how many million words must have been published in *Der Zoologische Garten* since it started in 1859!

Ken Kawata's frequent references to Heini Hediger are a reminder that the term 'zoo literature' embraces books as well as periodical publications. These too should ideally be digitized and made available on-line. Hediger's own *Wild Animals in Captivity – an Outline of the Biology of Zoological Gardens* (1964) and *Man and Animal in the Zoo – Zoo Biology* (1970) are among the classics in this field (both, unusually, translated from German for commercial publishers). They are still valuable reference works for zoo professionals, as is, for example, Lee S. Crandall's *Management of Wild Animals in Captivity* (1964). These books, though out of print, are relatively easy to find in the second-hand market; others are less readily accessible, such as the zoo historians' 'Bible', Gustave Loisel's 1912 *Histoire des ménageries de l'antiquité à nos jours* (not yet available in English, astonishingly, though a translation has been 'forthcoming' for the last 20 years or more). More recently, of course, numbers of weighty volumes have been published which seem to offer practical guidance on all aspects of the zoo business: I will mention just two of the weightiest, *Wild Mammals in Captivity: Principles and Techniques* (eds. Devra G. Kleiman *et al.*, University of Chicago Press, 1996) and *Zoo Animals: Behaviour, Management and Welfare* (eds. Geoff Hosey *et al.*, Oxford University Press, 2009 – see review, below, p. 26). These books are a necessary part of the equipment of any good zoo; but a glance at their lists of references is enough to show the wealth of previous work that has made them possible. Any one of these items might be valuable to someone wishing to research a particular topic in greater depth: how many of them, though, would a typical reader be able to locate with relative ease?

The case for an on-line zoo archive, then, seems to me to be irrefutable. The scale of the undertaking, though, is undoubtedly rather greater than I optimis-

tically suggested in the last issue ('a complete . . . archive . . . could be in existence just a few years from now'). Vernon Kisling argues that what might be called the 'Google model' has serious flaws. I wonder whether another giant of the Internet, Wikipedia, might offer a better example. The Wikipedia on-line encyclopedia is written collaboratively by unpaid contributors, who may include anyone with access to the Internet. The system seems to work surprisingly well, with editorial controls existing to remove substandard information. *Mutatis mutandis*, such a model might provide a way forward for a zoo archive. If clear technical guidelines were published, any keen supporter with a moderate level of expertise and equipment would be able to contribute. I suspect that amateur zoo enthusiasts might volunteer more enthusiastically than busy professionals: Jonas Livet's website (www.leszoosdanslemonde.com) is just one example of what can be achieved by a dedicated individual working primarily for his own satisfaction. (Another possible source of help, though, might be zoo people who have retired from full-time work.)

A number of other existing websites offer pointers to the way forward. The Avicultural Society, for example, has produced a cumulative index to its magazine right through from the first issue in 1894, which is freely available on-line. This is, of course, 'only' an index (though containing c. 80,000 words, including references to nearly a quarter of bird species, and thus representing a significant amount of work); a number of articles from recent volumes are available in full on the Society's website (www.avisoc.co.uk), but as far as I know there are no plans to scan and reproduce the entire corpus. (The Society is, however, trying to improve access to the original articles by compiling a database giving the whereabouts of significant holdings of the *Avicultural Magazine*.) A new site with great future potential is Louise Peat's compilation of bird hand-rearing protocols (www.avianrearingresource.co.uk – see IZN 56/7, 416). Then there is Kees Rookmaaker's Rhino Resource Center (www.rhinoreourcecenter.com): this, with over 5,700 PDFs of extracts from books and journals, is possibly the best model for a future comprehensive zoo site. Dr Rookmaaker is also involved with *Darwin Online* (<http://darwin-online.org.uk>), a project which includes all Charles Darwin's published works presented both as digital text and as images of the original publications, as well as the largest-ever collection of his private papers, correspondence and other materials. With this experience to draw on, Kees takes an optimistic view of the prospects for the zoo literature project. 'The investment would be relatively small for a huge global benefit,' he wrote to me in a recent e-mail. 'It only needs one person, a scanner, a computer, and some funds for procuring copies.' Too much advance planning might be a mistake, by revealing the daunting quantity of material that might potentially be included: better, perhaps, to keep in mind that *every* document processed makes a contribution towards the fulfilment of the scheme. It's the jobs that are never started that take longest to finish. A modest beginning could be made right away, if – in Vernon Kisling's words – 'some entity (a person or institution with passion and commitment)' could be found to give the project moral support and a little financial assistance. Vernon, Kees and I are continuing to discuss the idea and would appreciate comments from others with an interest in taking it forward. Please contact any of us (vkisling@uflib.ufl.edu, lcr26@cam.ac.uk or ngouldizn@aol.com) with your opinions or suggestions. I will hope to return to the subject in future issues of IZN.

Nicholas Gould