

The Journal on Developmental Disabilities: Its Beginnings

The spring of 2012 marks the 20th anniversary of the *Journal on Developmental Disabilities*. An anniversary of this type often makes people wonder how it all began. What follows is a brief description of our recollections of the journal's humble beginnings – and our big dreams – during the planning in 1991, the publication of the first issue in the spring of 1992. We also acknowledge the considerable progress and growth of the journal in the intervening 20 years.

Rebecca (Becky) Ward was a member of the Board of Directors of OADD in 1991, and was also Chair of its Communications Committee. At that time, the main function of the Communications Committee was to produce a newsletter, an early version of what was later known as *BrOADDcast*. In 1991, Ivan Brown, then a doctoral candidate, volunteered to sit on this committee alongside its other members. There had already been some discussion about the possibility of OADD sponsoring and publishing an academic journal – an idea that had been a dream of Maurice Feldman, Joel Hundert, and others around Ontario. Although it often seemed like “only a dream” to those of us promoting the idea, the journal progressed from the idea stage to the distinct-possibility stage as a number of discussions and planning meetings were held, with strong support from the OADD Board of Directors.

Becky did the groundwork for securing a name, *Journal on Developmental Disabilities/Le journal sur les handicaps du développement*, gathering information about production procedures and costs, and overseeing discussions about possible content of the journal and personnel to carry out the work of producing it. Ivan took on the task on setting up an Editorial Board and Consulting Editors to perform peer reviews for the journal by specifically inviting numerous scholars from across Canada and from around the world. The strong response to these invitations ensured that, from the beginning, JODD had national and international scholarly participation. Gary Woodill, who was a professor in the School of Early Childhood Education at Ryerson University, a Consulting Editor to JODD, and a colleague of Ivan, suggested that a new journal should start off with a dynamic theme, and that the first-ever issue might focus on sexuality and disability. This seemed like a very good idea to all of us, and Ivan, who took on the responsibility of becoming the first (founding) Editor of JODD with Becky and Janet Valcourt acting as Assistant Editors, began to solicit articles from international experts in sexuality and disability.

In May 1992, the initial issue of JODD appeared in print and was greeted with abundant applause when Becky introduced it to members of OADD's Board of Directors. That first issue of JODD included an editorial by Ivan entitled “Are We Willing to

Authors

Ivan Brown,
Rebecca Ward

Centre for Applied
Disability Studies,
Brock University,
St. Catharines, ON

Correspondence

ibrown@brocku.ca or
bward@brocku.ca

Keywords

journal publication,
developmental disability
history,
intellectual
disability history,
role of editors,
Ontario

'Normalize' Sexual Expression for Adults with Developmental Disabilities?" and eight scholarly articles on sexuality and disability. It also featured three book reviews and two thoughtful letters in its Mail Bag section. The initial Editorial Board was composed of: Susan Bryson, Maurice Feldman, James Bebko, Ben Goldberg, Bruce McCreary, and Dale Munro. There were 32 Consulting Editors, including virtually every academic in Ontario working in developmental disabilities at the time.

Both of us – Ivan and Becky – had a strong commitment not only to initiating JODD, but also ensuring that the journal succeeded over time. Becky continued to work as an Editorial Assistant to JODD and remained on OADD's Communications Committee for an additional seven years. Ivan continued as Editor of JODD until 1997, and resumed his involvement in 2000 right up to the present time. Both Becky and Ivan helped promote the journal through their work as OADD Board members and as Communications Committee Chairs; Ivan was also Chair of the Board from 1996–1998.

JODD has been a success over its 20 years because of strong commitment from numerous other people as well. Adrienne Perry and Ken Laprade were recruited to act as Associate Editors in 1993, a role that Adrienne excelled in for several years. Maurice Feldman acted as Editor-in-Chief for a period of three years in the late 1990s; a number of guest editors have overseen specific issues, and Ivan and his colleague Maire Percy edited several issues until they initiated the current editorial structure in 2004: a four-member Chief Editorial Board (currently, Maire Percy, Ann Fudge Schormans, Lynn Martin, and Jonathan Weiss, with Ivan acting as Editor Emeritus and Esther Ignagni as Media Editor). Since 1991 to the present time, the OADD Board of Directors has shown continuous strong support for the journal, something that has been particularly evident recently from the work of Liz Froeze, the immediate past Publications Committee Chair, Joe Persaud, the current Publications Committee Chair, and Jennifer Shaw, OADD's administrator who acts as Production Editor for the journal. The new design in 2008 by Ted Myerscough, with the addition of artwork by people with disabilities on the covers, gave JODD an attractive contemporary look.

The *Journal on Developmental Disabilities* has provided an important forum for scholars from Ontario and from around the world to publish their research findings and other scholarly papers. One aspect of the journal that we cherish is our openness to including new scholars, especially talented graduate students who will be the scholars and leaders of our field in the future.

We – both Becky and Ivan – are very proud indeed of our involvement in the beginning stages of the *Journal on Developmental Disabilities*. Over its first 20 years, it has gone from being an undertaking of just a few people to a dynamic and solid aspect of OADD activity. We look back on those first heady days in 1991 and 1992 with feelings of humility and amazement that we had the nerve to start an academic journal. At the same time, we are not without some feelings of a sense of accomplishment for founding a journal that has not only endured, but also flourished, for 20 years.

Acknowledgements

JODD would not be possible without the continued enthusiasm and financial sponsorship of the OADD Boards, and other financial sponsors. Special recognition should go to the 1991 Chair of the Board (Nancy Helzep-Woods), Dominic Conforti (Chair-Elect that year), and other founding Board Members.