

A Note from the Editors

With this Spring 2009 issue of the *ASIANetwork Exchange*, we complete the first full year of having transformed the consortium's newsletter into a journal. In concert with the *ASIANetwork* Board of Directors, we undertook this transformation because we all enthusiastically agreed that the new format would highlight our membership's belief that engagement in scholarly inquiry is an essential precondition to achieving teaching excellence. The pursuit of both of these goals is an aim to which we are deeply and collectively committed, and, with the contributions selected for publication in this issue, we are gratified that in format and content, such a commitment is clearly and effectively expressed in the following pages.

In further support of this aim, the current issue includes the first guest-edited section in the journal's history, with a thematic focus upon "Islam in Asia." We are particularly pleased that Barbara Metcalf of the University of Michigan volunteered to serve as our first guest editor, compiling several compelling articles with the close cooperation of Lisa Trivedi of Hamilton College. Not only is this focus timely, but Professors Metcalf and Trivedi, along with their contributors, treat this theme in a way that is both comprehensive and instructive. By giving our readership a greater context for understanding the presence of Islam in India, China, and Indonesia, and by challenging rigid categorizations and binaries that, although popular, obfuscate rather than enhance our understanding of Islam and its practitioners, the guest editors and authors of our special section perform an invaluable service.

At the same time, our other contributors to this issue offer creative possibilities for engaging students with Southeast Asian and Japanese traditions, cultures, and social practices. Their eclectic use of sources and varied media in support of their teaching reveals their genuine passion for their subject matter. Their desire to encourage students to pursue a similar degree

of engagement is clearly articulated throughout their articles. Our final contribution, by a student author, is based upon research she conducted in China during a Summer ASIANetwork Student-Faculty Fellows Program, funded by the Freeman Foundation Fellowship, and her report is an excellent example of the type of outstanding undergraduate student research we all seek to promote.

We wish finally to remind our readership that we are accepting applications from those who may wish to serve as guest-editor for a special section of the Spring 2010 issue of the *ASIANetwork Exchange*. Applications should include a rationale for the theme around which the special section is to be organized, a list of contributors or potential contributors to the section, and a statement regarding the qualifications of the guest editor and contributors. Applications should be submitted to us no later than July 1st and should be sent to: Illinois Wesleyan University, P. O. Box 2900, Bloomington, IL 61702-2900 or e-mail to anexchange@iwu.edu.

Tom Lutze and Irv Epstein
Co-Editors