

Academic Publishing in Transition: The Case of Foresight

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Richard A. Slaughter¹

Abstract

To progress from a broad, poorly understood and semicoherent domain to a recognized and successful field or profession, several observers have suggested that futures studies and applied foresight require appropriate professional standards. While the issue has been around for a while, published work on this subject is still relatively uncommon. This paper address that concern. It is derived from two sources: first, a research project on the “health” of futures studies from 2009 and, second, a content review of several recent volumes of the journal *Foresight*. The resulting analysis raises questions that need to be debated more widely. It also serves as a call for further work of this kind by different people, using different methods, to round out and further develop this account. A central question is as follows: what standards should be applied and by whom?

Keywords

foresight, futures field, social interests, methods, publications, capacity building, digital revolution, anthropocene, postnormal

If we are going to build a field developing credible, high-quality foresight, we are going to need to develop standards.¹

Introduction

In Jim Dator’s introduction to the new series of *World Future Review* under his editorship, he made it clear that the focus of the journal would now be “on futures studies itself as an academic discipline and as a practical, consulting activity.”² A concern for professional standards in futures studies and applied foresight is has been around for a while and arguably represents one of the main ways by which the profession can advance and prosper.³ The reverse is obviously also the case. Either way, journals play a major part in this process as they perform a number of critically vital roles that include reviewing professional activities, reporting on new and significant work, assisting in the dissemination of

ideas, providing a platform for individual opinions, and so on. Yet remarkably little attention has been paid to the question of standards within the journals themselves. Meanwhile, academic publishing is passing through a profound upheaval due to the continuing fallout from the “digital revolution.”

One result is that many journals with decades-long pedigrees no longer exist in the analogue world inhabited by human beings. They have been enticed or driven online where they risk taking on a kind of “shadow” existence mandated by apparently unstoppable forces. Publishers themselves are increasingly outcompeted by the power and ever-increasing

¹Foresight International, Indooroopilly, Australia

Corresponding Author:

Richard A. Slaughter, Foresight International, P.O. Box 793, Indooroopilly, QLD 4068, Australia.
Email: rslaughter@ozemail.com.au

reach of the “Internet oligarchs,” and mainstream authors find their incomes drastically reduced. Their academic equivalents—who it is assumed gain income in other ways—are now routinely expected to deal with part-time editors and negotiate often-clunky submission software for rewards that are purely symbolic. This is truly a “new world”—though whether it is a “brave” one we have yet to discover. From time to time, therefore, we need to stop and ask: how can futurists and foresight practitioners begin to assess how well—or poorly—journals that are directly relevant to their lives and work actually perform, and according to what standards? These were questions that emerged in mid-2007 as part of broader research into the State of Play in the Futures Field (SoPiFF), a project supported by the Seattle-based Foundation for the Future. Part of the background work was a critical review of several widely read futures journals. A copy of that original research document can, ironically, be found online.⁴

The material presented here is roughly one half of a further in-depth review of *Foresight* undertaken several years later. The motivation to undertake this fresh work emerged, in part, from concerns that arose during the process of coediting a special issue on Descent Pathways.⁵ The full text of that original paper along with an abridged version published in the Association of Professional Futurists’ (APF) journal *Compass* are also available online.⁶ This essay therefore leaves aside questions of editorial competence, the role of the editorial board, bias in reviews, and related topics. Its main focus is a systematic content analysis of the journal. It is by no means the only possible approach but it is arguably a credible one. As such, it raises questions about tendencies within futures work more widely and its relevance to a world undergoing a series of stressful and challenging transitions.

The focus on a single journal should obviously not be seen in isolation. Indeed, this is a rich area for continuing research. So it is very much to be hoped that other scholars will turn their attention to this and related journals, as well as to organizations, techniques, and so on. It is, perhaps, understandable that leading and prominent individuals are often most interested

in promoting and discussing their own work, their latest insights, techniques, and conclusions. There is value in this for others, of course, but it can become a rather one-sided display. So I concur with Dator and Hines that we should also encourage broader work specifically designed to promote or enhance the health and well-being of the profession itself. Overall, a lot more work is needed to provide further insights into the evolving character and identity of futures studies itself.

The following section considers the declared aims and objectives of *Foresight*. There follows an outline of the method used to carry out the content analysis over several volumes and relate this back to the original study. The rest of the paper reviews the content and themes that emerged through four categories: social interests, methods, focal domains, and capacity building (see below). Mention is also made of special issues and “outstanding works.” Finally, a few suggestions are put forward for further consideration.

Foresight Aims and Objectives

Foresight was established by Colin Blackman in 1999 initially under the Camford imprint. Blackman had previously been the editor of *Futures* and in many ways this was an attempt to branch out in a fresh direction. Initially, it succeeded rather well. Inside the front cover, it was described as

a bimonthly international and interdisciplinary journal providing a strategic view on the future. It publishes peer-reviewed articles, shorter comment pieces, essays, reports, book reviews and other regular features. *Foresight* will be an important vehicle for the publication of research, business analysis and policy-making on social, political, economic, technological and environmental issues that demand a long-term perspective. *Foresight* aims to direct futures thinking more effectively to provide practical guidance for today’s decision makers in business and government.⁷

During this early period, the journal consistently carried a rich array of offerings. The

main papers covered a wide range of topics from a variety of points of view. Crucially, these were regularly balanced by other items, including reports from meetings, book reviews, publications received, a conference calendar, and, last but not least, a stimulating column by Andy Hines called Hinesight. Sadly, however, this was not to last. In 2002, *Foresight* was purchased by Emerald. The latter had been in existence for forty years and, by 2007, was publishing over 150 journals. Blackman continued as editor but his budget and creative control steadily declined such that by 2007 it was not uncommon for issues to appear comprised solely of papers. An attempt to establish a new series of regular columns failed because the publisher refused to fund it. Always more practitioner-oriented than *Futures*, *Foresight* also seemed to become increasingly preoccupied with what might be called “futures/foresight technique” with little attention to global issues or to questions of value, purpose, and meaning. By 2007, the editorial scope was described in the following way:

Foresight invites contributions that provide a long-term perspective on important social, economic, political, technological and environmental issues. The journal is aimed at a business, policy making and academic audience. Articles should draw out the practical implications for decision makers in business and government (and) short articles and comment pieces on topical issues are particularly encouraged.⁸

As can be seen, these aims are similar to the original ones. Both are highly compressed; both stress “long-term perspectives” and “practical applications.” Yet, as noted, the content had narrowed considerably. For example, a look back over the previous ten issues from mid-2007 revealed only eleven book reviews (most written by one individual—Jacques Richardson—and dealing almost exclusively with French publications). During that same period, there were no columns at all and only a couple of conference reports.

As a result, it was hard to avoid the conclusion that *Foresight* provided rather “thin fare for a nascent discipline or field.” Similarly, while its publisher, Emerald,

likes to promote itself as being “international,” “relevant” and “innovative” recent issues of *Foresight* did “not support these aspirations.” It was “hard to avoid the conclusion that the publisher has starved the journal of the support it needs in order to thrive.”⁹

As one who had supported *Foresight* and been regularly published in it from its inception, this was not good news.

Scope and SoPiFF Results

The new phase of work began with a complete set of all ninety-six issues of the journal arranged on my desk in half a dozen library holders. This made it easy to move back and forth through the series from vol. 1, no. 1 in 1999 to vol. 16, no. 6 in late 2014.¹⁰ Then, to obtain a clear sense of what had been published recently, a detailed analysis of the contents of the journal over the last five volumes was carried out.¹¹ In so doing, sixteen special issues that had appeared during that time were also considered. It did not take long to realize that concerns refigured in the earlier SoPiFF report remained relevant. In fact, they would become even more obvious. What could this mean? And what were the wider implications?

It is relevant here to provide a sense of some of the results of the earlier exercise. Here are four key points and part of the conclusion from the lead article.

- There is much government work undertaken in the futures field, but it has primarily focused around science and technology (S&T) foresight.
- There is much work being done with strategy in various forms, which means that organizations are exposed to, and using, futures approaches as long as there is someone in the organization who thinks it is a good idea. However, there is little effort to tailor messages for the “person in the street” so that the imperative to think about the future every day becomes clear and inescapable.
- There is a sense of inconsistency of quality and output in the field, which is generated from the vast array of people

who call themselves futurists and who may or may not have any formal training in the field.

- There is a strong and dominant focus on conventional, pragmatic, government-funded research into science, technology, and economic questions. Such work is often of a very high quality but it also appears to be quite narrowly focused and based largely on the earlier and somewhat outdated methods. *In the light of the deteriorating global outlook there is a need to move beyond this focus to incorporate a civilisational focus, and greater attention to longer-term global sustainability*¹²

Then in the conclusion, four key meta-scanning insights were outlined as follows:

Several unique perspectives have emerged regarding the nature and results of futures work. Four are of particular significance. The operation of *fundamental social interests* seems to have been a collective “blind spot” that has seldom, if ever, been subject to formal enquiry, and yet it clearly exerts powerful effects upon what is considered worth doing, and why. This study explored FS/foresight work through distinctions between pragmatic, progressive and civilisational interests. These by no means exhaust the options but they have succeeded in shining new light on the field. Similarly, the *range of methods* brought into play in any one context is heavily influenced by past experience and prevailing paradigms and we have seen some of the results of these unconscious selections. Also revealed here for the first time are some of the consequences of working in a limited number of *focal domains*, most commonly the “lower right,” or “external collective” one.¹³ *The overall lack of interest in, and capacity to address, the interior worlds of people, including practitioners themselves, is perhaps one of the clearest results of this study that calls for corrective action.* Finally, this study has shown that the uneven approach to *capacity building* in futures enquiry and application warrants equal attention.¹⁴

Content and Themes

The scanning criteria mentioned above were derived from a meta-scanning framework

developed at the Australian Foresight Institute (AFI) and subsequently applied to a range of issues.¹⁵ The most significant of these was the SoPiFF project itself, published as a special issue of Foresight in 2009.¹⁶ The original framework employed six criteria:

1. Organizational type
2. Social interests
3. Methods
4. Focal domains
5. Capacity building
6. Country/location.¹⁷

For the purposes of this review, the four central criteria were most relevant: social interests, methods, focal domains, and capacity building. The first of these—social interests—was deemed to be of primary significance as they are constitutive of theory and practice. The other categories, while significant in their own right, add what might be called “color” and “flavor” in this context and were therefore applied more lightly.

Social Interests

One of the tenets of Critical Futures Study (CFS) is that in any account of futures or foresight work, social interests need to be taken fully into account. (Indeed, one of the structural deficiencies in much early work—and particularly in the United States—was a singular refusal to recognize and open to this dimension.) It was a fact then, and it remains one now, that social interests provide much of the driving force, motivation, and social resource(s) required for futures and foresight work to take place at all. They powerfully affect the selection of practitioners who are employed. They color its character, purposes, and operational details in a multitude of ways. In earlier work, I defined three types of social interests in foresight as follows:

Pragmatic foresight is . . . about carrying out today’s business better and, indeed, there is a range of fairly straightforward means by which foresight can be used to improve and extend current practice in a wide range of organisations. The fact that it is paradigmatically naïve does not

reduce its usefulness in a taken-for-granted way. Most organisations can benefit from some use of pragmatic foresight and there are many consultants and consulting organisations that can supply it.

Progressive foresight . . . contains some sort of explicit commitment to systemic improvement. Thus foresight in this mode can readily be linked with genuine attempts to reformulate business and organisational practices in the light of wider social and environmental concerns. Hence there is a strong link with what has been called “triple bottom line” accounting, Factor 4, Factor 10 (terms that basically refer to “doing much more with less”) and many other such innovations. Such work is about going beyond conventional thinking and practices and reformulating processes, products, services using quite different assumptions.

Civilisational foresight . . . seeks to understand aspects of the next level of civilisation—the one that lies beyond the current impasse, the prevailing hegemony of techno/industrial/capitalist interests. Civilisational foresight is perhaps the most fascinating and demanding domain of futures enquiry. It seeks to clarify just what might be involved in long term shifts towards a more balanced and sustainable world. By definition it draws on countless fields of culture and enquiry to set up notions of “design forward.” Such work allows us to speculate openly about such questions as: worldview design, underlying assumptions and values, civilisational myths and so on, as well as more down-to-earth matters such as infrastructure, governance and economic relations.¹⁸

To assess the influence of each of these in vols. 12 to 16, each issue was reviewed and each paper assigned to the category that best fitted it. The raw totals are as follows:

Pragmatic focus: 94
 Progressive focus: 65
 Civilizational focus: 9

It is essential to note at this point one obvious and immediate criticism—that such judgments are subjective. This is inarguable. Yet, at the same time, the numbers reveal a clear underlying reality that would likely not be greatly altered by others. The reason is straightforward—these

works do, in a very real sense, “declare themselves” quite openly. Well over half are devoted to here-and-now, broadly business-as-usual, administrative concerns. Progressive works are fewer but readily identifiable by their focus on improvement and/or innovation. They too are quite strongly represented. Finally, only a small minority of papers expressed or explored broader, more thoroughgoing and longer term civilizational concerns. It follows that despite various aspirational statements by editors and publishers, the good ship *Foresight* appeared to run predominantly on heavy-duty pragmatism. As such, it is precluded from dealing with the central questions of our time—what I have termed the “civilisational challenge” and the emerging “global emergency.”^{19,20}

One reason for the dominance of pragmatism is that most of the guest-edited special issues were derived from conferences and were largely or exclusively oriented toward science, technology, and business/administration. This raises a couple of significant questions: first, about the implications of the underlying social interests and the agendas that appear to dominate these events, and second, about an overall lack of editorial oversight.

Methods and Focal Domains

A similar bias was found in the types of methods addressed in these five volumes. Linear methods include various kinds of trend analysis, forecasting, and extrapolations. Systemic methods include systems modeling, scenario building, and aspects of Earth Science. Critical methods employ the tools of critical inquiry that have emerged over recent years to deal with issues of social construction and cultural understanding. Finally, integral methods employ systematic approaches and multiple perspectives to understand “reality” using a variety of ways of knowing. Linear and systemic methods were far and away the most commonly employed while critical and integral methods much less so. If this “snapshot” is correct, then the toolkit employed by practitioners did not appear to have changed greatly over the last decade. This clearly indicated a need for more detailed backup studies.

Interestingly, however, a similar picture emerged with “focal (or ‘reality’) domains.” These cover “structural,” “intersubjective,” “behavioral,” and “psychological” domains. As with the earlier study, the main focus was on structural (empirical, real-world) concerns, followed by intersubjective (cultural and institutional), behavioral (how people act and behave), and, finally, to a far lesser degree psychological (subjective, value based, interior).²¹ Taken at face value, this again suggests that this sample of futures publishing continues to focus on empirical and measurable phenomena to the detriment of, for example, underlying values and worldview commitments.

Capacity Building

Finally, and again, as with SoPiFF, a good deal of attention was paid to conceptual foundations and also to methods and tools. Rather less was paid to enabling structures and processes. Very little attention at all was given to the social legitimation that arguably underlies successful foresight work and that, when achieved, assures its own future. In other words, *by far the greatest proportion of futures and foresight work still appears to be located within various administrative, organizational, and business contexts.* From this sample, it appeared to barely exist in the wider world of, for example, public education, media discourse, and local governance where, given the state of the world, it is arguably needed most of all. This is quite obviously not the fault of any one publication. But, equally, and again as above, it displays if not a deeply embedded bias then perhaps an unacknowledged passivity on the part of those responsible for policy and direction. A summary of the review thus far would include the following.

- The focus on technology remains strong and is arguably even more entrenched than previously.
- Pragmatic foresight carried out by and for currently dominant social interests remains dominant over these five volumes.
- Equally, perspectives from beyond the current nexus of social, political, economic,

and technical power remain significantly underrepresented.

- The methods continue very much as described previously with linear and systemic methods remaining dominant; critical methods are used but far less frequently; integral methods remain scarce.
- Domains of inquiry remain dominated by structural and, to a lesser extent, intersubjective phenomena; behavioral and psychological domains continue to be underappreciated and underutilized.
- Again as we saw with the earlier study, capacity building remains fixated on conceptual foundations and methods; far less attention is paid to creating and sustaining enabling structures and processes; the issue of social legitimation for high-quality foresight work is barely mentioned anywhere.

It seems clear from the above that the central conclusions of the SoPiFF project fell upon deaf ears. More importantly, however, it seems that over the ensuing years, very little attention was paid to the “deteriorating global outlook” or to the need to bring into foresight work “the interior worlds of people, including practitioners themselves.” This is disappointing to say the least and shows that progressive recommendations of this kind—and the work they are derived from—have achieved surprisingly little traction.

One key reason for this is undoubtedly the oppositional “headwinds” created by the dominance of neoliberal market-oriented ideology. Few can now rationally doubt that they have proved powerfully destructive of many progressive and civilizational projects, to our still underappreciated but collective cost.²² *Yet it is vanishingly rare for the nature and impact of those “headwinds” to be mentioned—let alone openly discussed—within futures journals.* It is difficult to interpret this as anything other than a kind of shared blindness or ideological naivety, neither of which are signs of health or vigor. Similarly, only a handful of papers or issues address the historically unprecedented expansion, growth, and collective impacts of

humanity—what Sardar calls “post-normal” times.²³ This is despite the well-proven fact that they continue to breach significant global boundaries that imply Dystopian consequences.^{24,25} This alone is an extraordinary oversight for a field ostensibly concerned with futures.

It is worth repeating that no journal can be held responsible for this sad state of affairs. Futures publications are bound to reflect what might be called “realities in the field.” The latter reflect the ideological prejudices and worldview commitments of the time, especially as promulgated by the rich and powerful.²⁶ There is, however, another side to this—that the publishing and editorial process has failed to acknowledge the broader picture or to take any effective action to either address or compensate for these oversights.

One can see this clearly in the predominance of material sourced from S&T meetings that, by definition, are relevant only to a small minority of specialized people. It is not pushing the point too far to suggest that many—if not most—of these are motivated at least as much by pragmatic here-and-now interests and concerns as by progressive or civilizational ones. Indeed, if the latter can be found at all in these convocations of experts, they have either been very quiet or perhaps their voices have been stifled. There are exceptions (mentioned below) but they are few in number. It follows that a significant proportion of the papers published in *Foresight* over the five-year period covered is of little or no value to those whose interests go beyond questions of technical strategy, administration, and business.

Special Issues

Special issues of futures journals are not uncommon. They provide a cheap and seductively easy way for journals to source new material because they utilize the voluntary labor of well-qualified people, most of whom are mid-level salaried employees of other organizations. The task is made even more straightforward when issues are direct outcomes of work presented at professional meetings as (1) the work is already at an advanced stage, (2) there is normally a range of offerings

to select from, and (3) guest editors are easy to find and will work without remuneration.

During the period under review, sixteen of thirty issues were guest-edited, that is, just over half (see Table 1). As shown in Table 2, of these, eight were technology-oriented. Three special issues dealt primarily with methods. Three addressed global concerns. Only two addressed social/cultural concerns. Nine of the guest-edited issues were produced from conferences and associated presentations. This array of voluntary labor represents a vast and mostly unacknowledged subsidy to the journal and, of course, the publisher.

Outstanding Works

A different but equally useful (and constructive) test is to highlight works that stand out from what could be described as the “techno/admin dross.” These are works that surprise one with their originality or relevance, works that one reads and that stay with one, and works that are part of the wider conversations that ebb and flow through the futures domain. Overall, I found perhaps twenty or thirty papers out of the 168 published over the five years that are worthy of careful attention.²⁷ Much of the rest may be regarded as unproductive padding that serves the usual array of conventional interests. By contrast, the best work brings new ideas to the table, reports on worthwhile research and projects, helps to redefine or shape the future of the enterprise, and draws attention to global issues and problems. Once again, it can be argued that this is merely a matter of opinion.

Responses obviously depend on the interior structures of, for example, values, paradigms, and worldviews. For example, a business executive with a sociocentric worldview and entrepreneurial values will operate with a completely different set of priorities to a social activist with a world-centric worldview and postmaterialist values. One will see the world as full of “opportunities” while the other will perceive them to be interspersed with dangers that suggest a need for quite different kinds of social and other responses. What is really at stake here is the question—what really matters?

Table 1. Special Issues of Foresight, 2010 to 2014.

Emerging methods and application areas in technology foresight (vol. 12, no. 2) <i>Conf.</i>
Anticipatory systems and the philosophical foundations of futures studies (vol. 12, no. 3)
Methodological issues in foresight studies (vol. 13, no. 2) <i>Conf.</i>
Is Africa the land of the future?
Diversifying the application fields of FTA methods (vol. 13, no. 4)
Foreseeing disruptive technological issues (vol. 13, no. 5) <i>Conf.</i>
Foresight impacts from around the world (vol. 14, no. 1) <i>Conf.</i>
Managing technological challenges in a globally connected business (vol. 14, no. 2) <i>Conf.</i>
Diversifying the application fields of FTA methods (two issues) (vol. 14, no. 4) <i>Conf.</i>
Innovations in horizon scanning for the social sector (vol. 14, no. 6)
FTA approaches to identifying science and technology innovation developments (vol. 15, no. 1) <i>Conf.</i>
The millennium project and beyond (vol. 15, no. 5)
Managing the challenge of emerging technologies (vol. 15, no. 6) <i>Conf.</i>
Key issues for global governance in 2030 (vol. 16, no. 2)
Mining technology intelligence for policy and strategy development (vol. 16, no. 3) <i>Conf.</i>
Descent pathways (vol. 16, no. 6)

Note. *Conf.* = issue derived from conference papers; FTA = future-oriented technology analysis.

Table 2. Special Issues by Subject Matter.

Technology

- Emerging methods and application areas in technology foresight
- Diversifying the application fields of FTA methods
- Foreseeing disruptive technological issues
- Managing technological challenges in a globally connected business
- Diversifying the application fields of FTA methods (two issues)
- FTA approaches to identifying science and technology innovation developments
- Managing the challenge of emerging technologies
- Mining technology intelligence for policy and strategy development

Methods

- Anticipatory systems and the philosophical foundations of futures studies
- Methodological issues in foresight studies
- Innovations in horizon scanning for the social sector

Global perspectives

- Key issues for global governance in 2030
- Foresight impacts from around the world
- The millennium project and beyond

Social/cultural

- Is Africa the land of the future?
 - Descent pathways
-

Note. FTA = future-oriented technology analysis.

That is a question for everyone working in futures. But it cannot be answered without paying as much attention to the human and cultural interior domains (such as values and worldviews) as to the more usual external dimensions (such as science, technology, and infrastructure).

Related Issues in a Digitized World

There are obviously many other issues affecting academic publishing during the present transition that cannot be addressed here. An exception, perhaps, is the implications of

wholesale digitization and the benefits of, for example, paper offprints as compared with digital PDFs. *Foresight* was never particularly generous in this respect, but in previous years authors received maybe half-a-dozen full-sized offprints papers—which was something. This now-defunct practice can perhaps be seen as the last tangible evidence of any real sense of courtesy or mutuality between the journal and those whose work provides its rationale and substance. From that time on, the whole process progressively shrank to little more than an attenuated transactional exchange—“just business.” Now instead of offprints, authors are fortunate to receive a clean and correct PDF of their work. Yet even here there is a further regression that one-sidedly favors the publisher. Not long ago, PDFs were merely clean and stable copies of the printed material. More recently, *Foresight* has added an ugly full-page header that drives home the uncompromising message that the work is the property of the publisher. This, let it be noted, is regardless of whether the author has transferred copyright to the publisher or not.²⁸

There is a further and, in a specifically futures-related context, highly significant twist to this story. At the time of writing, the vice president of Google, Vint Cerf, was reported as saying that we face a “forgotten generation, or even a forgotten century” as a result of what he termed “bit rot.”²⁹ Cerf added that “we are nonchalantly throwing all our data into what could become an information black hole without realising it,”³⁰ which raises the question as to why a journal dedicated to promoting foresight practices would itself passively follow the trend in this risky and problematic direction without some major questions being raised—if not by the publisher’s employees then by the board. Or to put it differently, what are the chances that the remaining offprints in studies such as my own may, like hard copy books, still be around long after the present generation of PDFs becomes further monetized, unreadable, or, indeed, lost forever?³¹

Conclusion

This is a work in progress, and others are encouraged to carry out their own assessments

as they think fit. As part of that wider involvement, a prepublication version of the full original paper was circulated to about a dozen international colleagues (see the appendix). One asked a key question: was it reasonable to critique *Foresight* for lacking a “civilizational” focus when it was mainly intended for practitioners? The point is worth considering, and yet the whole thrust of the critique outlined above points toward a different question. What are the implications of foresight practitioners plying their trade *without* locating it more explicitly in a clear and explicit understanding of the threatened/unstable global context? Surely we now all live in a postnormal, “overshoot” world?³²

That, I submit, has become a default concern for a growing number of people who care about the future but whom in no way would consider themselves futurists. It follows that facing up to the implications of the Anthropocene, of “overshoot” futures, and the continuing slide to Dystopia is no longer merely a futures concern.³³ Failing to address these prospects consistently and in depth can, therefore, be read as not only dishonoring some of the core principles of futures studies and applied foresight (such as caring for future generations) but also losing sight of the grounds of our own humanity.³⁴ The whole point here is a need to face reality and to suggest appropriate ways forward. So, focusing back on the journal itself, here are a few suggestions that need to be widely debated and perhaps implemented.

- We assume that the decline of *Foresight* needs to be, and can be, arrested and reversed.
- The content of the journal urgently needs to be reviewed. Six issues a year of medium to poor quality may be profitable but they are excessive and unhelpful to the profession.
- More explicit guidelines are needed to solicit submissions that go beyond the current preoccupation with techno-administrative concerns and open to wider human, cultural, and global concerns.
- “Motherhood” statements of broad general aims need to be revised and replaced by a much clearer articulation of values, purposes, and priorities.

- The submissions software currently in use needs to be overhauled and made far more user friendly. It should never be forgotten that writers can *communicate* with human editors but only *reply* to software. There is a huge difference.
- Editorial focus and availability is primary so the issue of editorial time and capacity that arises when editors are only available part-time need to be addressed.
- Editors need to communicate effectively with the board and others to ensure a continuing multithreaded conversation. Without this, the spirit of a journal dies.
- At the submission stage, authors should be openly given the option of reassigning copyright, selecting a license, or using a Creative Commons agreement. This is long overdue.

If such issues can be taken seriously and put into practice, then there is reason to believe that the apparent decline of *Foresight* can be arrested. Then, finally there is a related conversation to be had about how the field of futures studies and applied foresight can or should emulate professional arrangements employed by other credible fields, that is, by taking responsibility for their own core publications. Perhaps the most serious issue in the current context is that so much of our work continues to be appropriated, and the economic value it represents lost to the field.

I invite all concerned readers to stop and think, to consider what should be done, by whom, and when.

Appendix

Note on Reviewers' Contributions

Although this article was obviously written by an individual, the issues raised are clearly of broader significance. Hence, the wider any subsequent conversation can become the better. A step toward that process was the circulation of earlier drafts of the paper to eight well-qualified reviewers from around the world. I am grateful to each of them for their direct and uncompromising comments, many

of which have been addressed. Some other key points are summarized below, along with brief responses in parentheses.

It may be unfair to concentrate on a single journal. (Agreed. But the process had to start somewhere. It is arguably beyond the capacity of any one individual to survey the whole field in similar depth. Indeed, it would be preferable for a number of people to carry out similar reviews as it would help to compensate for individual biases.)

What is published in any one journal is not necessarily representative of work being carried out in the field, especially when some of it may be commercial in confidence. (Perhaps. It's clearly a sample. Equally, one of the most highly respected reviewers actually stated the opposite by declaring that the paper does indeed constitute "a true representation of the field now.")

Starting with one publication is OK but the context needs to be broadened. (Agreed. This is, however, beyond the scope of any but a full-time researcher or team.)

Many of the problems identified in the article arise—at least in part—from wider technical developments. (Agreed. Which suggests that far more attention needs to be paid to these very same developments. Morozov's in-depth work on "the Internet" is an excellent place to begin—which is why his book is referenced here.)

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Notes

1. Andrew Hines, "Can I Get a Job as a Futurist?" *World Future Review* 8, no. 1 (2016): 46–53.
2. Jim Dator, "Introduction and Welcome," *World Future Review* 7, no. 4 (2015): 311–23.
3. Richard Slaughter, "Professional Standards in Futures Work," *Futures* 39 (1999): 835–51.

4. A copy of the original document is here: http://richardslaughter.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Metascan_Futures_Journals_2009.pdf.
5. Joshua Floyd and Richard Slaughter, "Descent Pathways Editorial Introduction," *Foresight* 11, no. 5 (2014): 6–20. http://richardslaughter.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Floyd_Slaughter_Descent_Pathways_editorial_Final.pdf.
6. Copies of the full extended analysis and published abridged version are here: http://richard-slaughter.com.au/?page_id=1974.
7. Colin Blackman, "Editorial Policy," *Foresight* 1, no. 1 (1999): inside cover.
8. Colin Blackman, "Editorial Policy," *Foresight* 9, no. 3 (2007): inside cover.
9. Richard Slaughter, "Critical Review of Futures Journals" (research paper, 2009). http://richard-slaughter.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Journals_Metascan_2009.pdf.
10. Little did I know at the time that this would be the very last moment that such an operation could be undertaken. Vol. 16, no. 6, 2014, was the very last hard copy issue of the journal.
11. I should add here that I undertook this exercise as an unpaid, ethically motivated service to the profession and at no point received any income or other support for so doing.
12. Richard Slaughter, "The State of Play in the Futures Field: A Metascanning Overview," *Foresight*, 11, no. 5 (2009): 6–20. Emphasis added.
13. For an authoritative source on Integral methodology, see Ken Wilber, *Integral Psychology* (Boston: Shambhala, 2000).
14. Slaughter, "The State of Play in the Futures Field," 18. Emphasis added. Also see Wilber, *Integral Psychology*.
15. Jose Ramos, "Foresight Practice in Australia: A Meta-scan of Practitioners and Organisations," Australian Foresight Institute, Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, 2004. http://richardslaughter.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2008/06/AFI_Monograph_07.pdf.
16. Slaughter, "The State of Play in the Futures Field."
17. Slaughter, "The State of Play in the Futures Field," 9.
18. Richard Slaughter, *Futures beyond Dystopia: Creating Social Foresight* (London: Routledge, 2004).
19. Richard Slaughter, *To See with Fresh Eyes, Integral Futures and the Global Emergency* (Brisbane: Foresight International, 2012).
20. The suggestion that "hands-on practitioners" need not be concerned with such matters is one that I believe should be rejected. It may not be a primary focus of specific projects but all live within the current "overshoot" world.
21. See Slaughter, "The State of Play in the Futures Field," for details of these categories.
22. See Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway, *Merchants of Doubt* (Bloomsbury: London, 2011); Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* (Allen Lane: London, 2014); and Richard Slaughter, "The Denial of Limits and Interior Aspects of Descent," *Foresight* 16, no. 6 (2014): 527–49.
23. Ziauddin Sardar, "Postnormal Artefacts," *World Future Review* 7, no. 4 (2015): 342–50.
24. Barry Brook, "The Limits of Planetary Boundaries 2.0," "Brave New Climate, 2015," <http://bravenewclimate.com/2015/01/16/the-limits-of-planetary-boundaries-2-0/>.
25. See Brook, "The Limits of Planetary Boundaries 2.0," for a critique of simple views and uses of notions of planetary boundaries.
26. For example, at the time of writing, two recent events in Queensland have clearly exposed the dominance of regressive planning initiatives. First, there are in play competing proposals to build several more very large and ambitious casinos. These produce large profits but are also well understood to be social parasites that dominate whole localities both visually and economically. Second, a new Queensland premier has given the go-ahead to an Indian company for the further development and expansion of coal mining in the Galilee Basin. As is usually the case, the rationale mentions jobs and well-being in the short term. But *the long-term consequences* of this kind of activity are deliberately obscured. In both cases, the complete lack of high-quality foresight—or any foresight at all—once again shows how insoluble problems for the future are created through ignorance and power in the present.
27. A full list is provided in the full version of the original paper available online (see note 4).
28. To say nothing of the fact that Adobe has now monetized PDFs such that if a user wishes to manipulate one in any way, a monthly fee must be paid. This may not be a huge issue for those working in institutions but it is onerous for most other individuals and indicative of other, wider, trends. See Evgeny Morozov, *To Save Everything Click Here* (Penguin: London, 2013).

29. This is not news to those who have been paying attention. I used to call this the “archive problem” until I discovered that others had coined the term “digital continuity” (or “discontinuity”). It remains an unresolved and widely overlooked problem.
30. Ian Sample, “Google Boss Warns of ‘Forgotten Century,’” *Guardian*, Manchester, February 13, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/feb/13/google-boss-warns-for-gotten-century-email-photos-vint-cerf>.
31. The work of Morozov is critical here. See Morozov, *To Save Everything Click Here*.
32. Paul Ehrlich and Anne Ehrlich, “Can a Collapse of Global Civilisation Be Avoided?” *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 280 (January 2013): 20122845.
33. Ugo Bardi, *The Limits to Growth Revisited* (New York: Springer, 2011); Kerryn Higgs, *Collision Course: Endless Growth on a Finite Planet* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004).
34. Clive Hamilton, *Requiem for a Species* (Crows Nest, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 2010).

Author Biography

Richard A. Slaughter is a writer, practitioner, and innovator in Futures Studies and applied foresight. He was Foundation Professor of Foresight at the Australian Foresight Institute, Melbourne. He is the author or editor of some twenty books and many papers, and board member of several journals. In 2010, he was voted as one of “the best all-time Futurists” by members of the Foresight Network, Shaping Tomorrow.