



Colloques du Centre d'études interdisciplinaires  
Walras-Pareto - Université de Lausanne

**Bridel Pascal, "Editing Economists and Economists as Editors" in *Revue européenne des sciences sociales*, Tome XXX, N.92, 1992, pp. 5-7.**

Ce numéro peut être commandé à:  
LIBRAIRIE DROZ S.A.  
11, rue Massot CH-1211 Genève 12

---

Editing Economists and Economists as Editors was the topic chosen for the conference organised on 26-27 September 1991 to mark the first year of existence of the Centre Walras-Pareto and, of course, the first century of the transformation of the old Academie de Lausanne (founded in 1537) into the University of Lausanne. Walras, who, with Pareto, put Lausanne on the world map of economic theorists, was in fact one of the last rectors of the old Academy. One might well add, tongue in cheek, that the fact that 1991 also marks the 700th anniversary of the Swiss Confederation was nothing but sheer coincidence!

This Conference represented a modest attempt to reduce the relative isolation of economist-editors from each other. The sub-title of Donald Moggridge's paper «What economist-editors might learn from others» encapsulates particularly well the spirit of this symposium. Furthermore, the conference organiser rapidly realized that some of the most prestigious theorists being currently edited by contributors were in fact already distinguished editors in their own right. By comparing their efforts with our own, we can learn a good deal about the evolution of the mode of transmission of knowledge in economic theory.

It is of course with the enthusiasm and the sheer thoughtlessness of a complete beginner in the field of editing that I tried to put this programme together. After all, I am only marginally associated with the editors of Walras's collected writings. Fortunately, Professor Busino who has been working for the past twenty-five years on Pareto's *Oeuvres complètes*, was a great help in shaping the programme of the Conference.

The response to our first letter sent in November 1990 was tremendously encouraging. The enthusiasm with which people volunteered to contribute papers and the fact that all of these were ready on time were very pleasant surprises indeed. There was, after all, a genuine need for a conference such as this. Furthermore, the interest in our venture grew stronger and stronger as months went by. The very substantial set of papers contained in this volume is the final result which we are proud to present today. Unfortunately, the stimulating, instructive and sometimes intense discussions that took place around this collection of papers cannot be reproduced here.

All relevant types of available materials - books, articles, diaries, letters, correspondence, lectures notes, official and private papers - are represented in the present volume. Furthermore, most issues faced by editors are discussed at one point or another. Such as: the criteria of selection, presentation and explanation of texts (Moggridge; Goutte/Potier), the transcription of unpublished manuscript material (Schoorl; Bridel), identifying anonymous authors (Graenewegen), translation (Van

Daal/Potier), the nature of the general editorial introduction (Porta; Fusco), the rule of parsimony applied to textual notes (Graenewegen), the degree of invisibility of the editor's hand (Black), the principle of increasingly likely editorial incompetence as the editor moves further away from his own area of scholarly experience (Whitaker), the law of diminishing returns in the search of new material and greater comprehensiveness (Whitaker), the fashion-effects resulting in financial constraints (Busino), the importance of the biographical material to be included (Graenewegen), the technical and typographical presentation of variorum editions (Mouchot), the relevance of private and semi-official diaries (Howson), newspaper material and journalistic experience (Yagi), the editing of lecture notes from various sources (Genovese; Bridel), editing living economists (Jolink), the editorial impartiality and/or bias (Milgate; Porta), the role of the publisher (Busino; Milgate), editing 'by theme' rather than 'by author' (Bridel), the importance of the philosophical environment (Raffaelli, Szenberg). Finally, various aspects of the crucial move from editing to interpreting appear in practically all contributions but specifically with reference to Smith (Skinner) and the use of scholarly editions by historians of thought (Dockès/Servet).

The sense of isolation mentioned earlier is clearly reinforced by a language barrier that did not exist before the First World War. Judging by the correspondence of, e.g., Ricardo, Say, Mill, Marx, Jevons, Walras, Menger and Pareto to name but a few, pre-twentieth century economists could easily exchange ideas, and sometimes difficult ones, in more than one language. At any rate, it would be silly to attempt to put the clock back and drop English as the lingua franca of economists. However, historians of thought, and of course economist-editors, are probably among the last representatives of an endangered species: the literate economist. It was thus thought useful, for this Conference, to resume a bilingual tradition that dates back to the earliest time of modern economic theory. But of course, à l'impossible nul n'est tenu: the choice was restricted to two languages only, English and, of course, French. Apologies are reiterated to the Japanese, Italian, German, Portuguese and Dutch speaking contributors. Short of any better alternative, the programme was arranged chronologically into five sessions; the fifth and last being devoted to the move from editing to interpreting. Given the highly specialized character of the problems involved, the organiser eventually gave up the idea of having discussants. On the one hand, it is a rather time consuming process; on the other, all the participants had some expertise in the field of editing-some being, of course, past masters in this domain. An indication of the substantial editorial experience accumulated by the contributors is the number of volumes completed or in progress - a rough estimate brings this total to more than a hundred !

This Conference depended on several people and institutions for its success. A generous financial support to run it and publish the proceedings came from the Fonds du Centième Anniversaire de l'Université de Lausanne. The help of its chairman Professor P.-E. Pilet is gratefully acknowledged. Without the hospitality of the *Revue européenne des sciences sociales* edited by G. Busino and the generosity of its publisher, Droz of Geneva, the publication of this volume would not have been possible at all. The labours of the editor-organiser were eased a great deal by Florian Jacot-Descombes. Without his skills and dependability to ease things along smoothly, the organisation of the Conference and the practical arrangements would never have been as perfect as they actually were. Special thanks are also due to Pascal Fracheboud for preparing the various manuscripts for the printers.

Finally, it is the editor's pleasant duty to record here his indebtedness to all his fellow contributors for their encouragement, kind cooperation and friendship.

*Centre d'études interdisciplinaires Walras-Pareto  
Université de Lausanne*