

ACADEMIC NEWS

ON THE RELEASE OF THE FIRST ISSUE OF THE RENAISSANCE JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND THE HUMANITIES

The maiden issue of Ethiopian Renaissance Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (ERJSSH) appeared first in electronic version and later in print. The print edition was issued in November 2014 and it was the successful end point of yearlong academic and logistic challenges, institutional efforts and, above all, intensive teamwork. The moment called for a celebration, which was solemnly held on December 18, 2014 at Lamergeyer Hotel, Gondar. The celebration turned into one of the highlights in the academic year of our University. The participants included the President of the University, the deans, the directors, the department heads and research center coordinators as well as guests from various international institutions, university communities and other stakeholders. Besides celebrating the release of the first issue of ERJSSH, further objectives of the ceremony included disseminating the Journal among colleagues and different stakeholders and promoting its upcoming issues. The inaugural ceremony also helped the participants to share their experiences and to boost the quality of academic output within the university, which is called to contribute to good policy making and problem solving in the country.

Dr Andreu Martínez, recently appointed managing editor of ERJSSH, acted as the host for the meeting and opened the celebration with a short speech. He then gave the turn to Dr Yemataw Wondie, ERJSSH editor-in-Chief. Dr Yemataw delivered a welcome speech addressed to professor Mengesha Admasu, President of the University of Gondar, the deans of the different colleges and faculties, directors, heads of schools and departments and all other guests. Dr Yemataw stressed the importance of the maiden issue of ERJSSH, the online version of which appeared at a momentous time, when the University was celebrating its Diamond Jubilee. The journal is also the second of its kind to be published by the University after the Biomedical Science Journal. Dr Yemataw expressed his sincere thanks to the ERJSSH editorial members, who worked indefatigably to accomplish the goals set, and also to the initial committee, who took the initiative to conduct an assessment and to share experience from different universities to establish the Journal. He further appreciated the efforts of manuscript contributors, language editors and article reviewers, who sacrificed their precious time in critically reading, evaluating and commenting on the manuscripts. Furthermore, he emphasized that the release of the first issue of ERJSSH could not have been possible without the full support received from the College of Social Sciences and Humanities and the university's top management, particularly the Office of the Vice President for Research and Community Services. Miss Abebech Molla was also thanked for her important contribution in formatting and doing the layout of the Journal.

Dr Yemataw in his speech also dwelt on the history and organization of the Journal. He explained that before the senate of the University approved the present name, other names such as Journal of Maraki and Journal of Blue Nile were considered. The present name was chosen because it embodied the wish of the Ethiopian nation to regain the glory of the past with present achievements and efforts. He also provided a few hints concerning the ERJSSH's organization. The Journal is structured through two chief bodies: the first one is the main executive body, consisting of an editor-in-chief, a managing editor and three associate editors; the second body consists of an editorial board formed by senior academics and scholars from Ethiopia and abroad who provide consultation and guidance. Furthermore, a third external body is formed by the peer reviewers, which consists of a pool of more than eighty high-ranking national and international scholars from different fields within the area of social sciences and the humanities.

In his speech Dr Yeamataw also spoke of the specific story of the Journal's maiden issue. In the preliminary stages, dissemination of information—through social media, Email lists, and workshops—on the prospected Journal was done in order to receive contributions. A total of fifteen manuscripts were submitted to the editorial office. After going through the different steps, including plagiarism check, internal review, peer review, of the fifteen manuscripts, seven were chosen for publication. Out of these, six were original research articles and a seventh text was a review article. The articles published reflected the multidisciplinary nature of ERJSSH, encompassing different fields within the social sciences and the humanities, such as linguistics, geography, development studies, psychology, politics, and history.

The next speaker was Dr Menberu Teshome, acting Dean of the College of Social Sciences and the Humanities and member of the editorial team of ERJSSH. Dr Menberu said that the College has started the ERJSSH with the objective of publishing scientific research that would help to solve societal problems and support teaching learning process by disseminating the knowledge and publishing the original works of the staff of the College and the University so that can reach the wider public.

Dr Tadesse, acting Vice President for Research and Community Services, addressed the audience. Dr Tadesse congratulated the editorial team for their commitment in bringing out the second journal in the history of the University of Gondar into completion. He emphasized the importance of the arrival of the new journal, which coincides with an expansion in the activities of the Research and Community Services Office as well as with the return of the newly graduated PhD staff of the University. Therefore, the ERJSSH is called to play a crucial role in disseminating ongoing research to the wider community.

Prof Mengesha Admasu, President of the University of Gondar, gave the concluding speech. Prof. Mengesha congratulated the College of Social Sciences and the Humanities for realizing the vision of the University to have at least two journals running during the diamond jubilee year. He also

stressed that the University expected the College of Economics and Business Management to join soon with the release of its own journals. Moreover, Prof. Mengesha pointed out the importance of the goals of the Journal, including maintaining the quality throughout its issues, targeting an international audience and serving as a platform for the College's staff. Furthermore, the publication should serve to tackle problems at the local, national and international levels. Prof. Mengesha appreciated the support of the expatriates in sharing their skills and experiences and their contribution to the success of the Journal.

During the discussion session that followed, Dr Getahun, editor-in-chief of the Biomedical Science Journal, shared his six-years' experience of running the journal. Dr Getahun expressed his concern over the different challenges his journal faced. Among these were the problem of budget and human resources, the falling submission rate of articles, the struggle to keep up quality and peer reviewers' failing in their commitments. He finally underscored the need to focus on the sustainability of the Journal.

Following this, Dr Kassahun Tegegne, member of the editorial team of ERJSSH, raised issues related to the problem of plagiarism checker. So far the Journal work has been relying on free on-line versions of plagiarism checkers, which renders this task cumbersome. Hence, he requested the University to purchase licensed software to help in this task. He further stressed the importance of having access to online journals and databases for the academic community. For that reason he urged the university to subscribe to different publishers in order to have access to journals for teaching, learning and for research activities. In addition, the ICT Centre of the University should focus on supporting the webpage and online article submission system of ERJSSH and in assuring that the server is active on permanent basis.

On his part Mr Kelali Kiros, Dean of the Law School, appreciated the College of Social Sciences and the Humanities for successfully publishing its Journal and announced that the journal from the Law School would be soon launched.

Andreu Martinez
Kassahun Tegegne
Satyanarayana Kurma

University of Gondar