

Editorial

In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good. (*Eccl.* 11.6).

We are glad to publish the eleventh volume of *SCIAMVS* in autumn, much earlier than usual, thanks to the authors who have submitted valuable articles. Ten years ago we started this journal with the hope of publishing one volume each year for twelve years, that is, one whole cycle of the celestial revolution of Jupiter. Having now nearly achieved this objective, we are extremely grateful to the authors, to the referees and to the subscribers who have helped make this journal possible with no official support.

With this volume, we have finally made an important editorial decision: to publish *SCIAMVS* in both print and electronic formats. We began work on *SCIAMVS* in the last year of the second millennium, and the editorial process has been electronic from the beginning. Nevertheless, the journal was only distributed in print format. Although, in recent years, electronic journals have become the norm while paper journals are beginning to appear obsolete, we have continued to publish only in paper format. This was not without reason.

SCIAMVS treats pre-modern primary sources. They are generally manuscripts, which have come down to us, in spite of the loss of innumerable other sources which may have been more valuable. While there is no need to explain to the readers of *SCIAMVS* the difficulties which must have been overcome for a source to survive for centuries, allow us to make one remark: almost none of our existing sources was continuously preserved with conscious attention throughout the centuries. In most cases, they have been revived after long periods of oblivion, indifference and neglect. Their survival was made possible by the fact that they are written in the form of material objects—clay tablets, parchment or papyrus—objects which preserve text, with or without the conscious and continuous efforts of human beings.

Electronic documents, notwithstanding all their advantages, have not been proved to be capable of surviving for centuries, overcoming the oblivion and negligence, which are the most insidious enemies of the tradition.

The magnetic and optomagnetic medias in general use at the moment, are not known to survive even for some decades without constant human effort and management. Moreover, an adequate apparatus is required to consult them in some human-readable format. In short, they are not yet a fully reliable media for the transmission of the results of our research to colleagues who will come decades or even centuries after our time.

Proof of the durability of a material in the long term can be obtained only after that term has passed; the necessity of an adequate reading apparatus may render the preserved media useless for all practical purposes. It is enough to remember that the whole corpus of texts printed on acid paper from the 19th to early 20th century is now perishing, and it is now difficult—at least for an individual—to play a 78rpm record or find a reel-to-reel tape recorder.

Some may say that the computer provides the definitive solution to all these difficulties, with the easiness of copying and the searchability it provides. However, is it really any wiser to believe, now, that all the data existing on computers will never be lost, than it was to believe, at the time of the emperor Trajan, that the Roman Empire would never cease to exist?

It is a recent trend of many libraries, now, to purchase only the electronic version of journals, and not to subscribe to the print edition. This seems a kind of cream-skimming, disregarding one of the primary duties of the library, that of transmitting documents to future generations, in order to save costs in the present.

Thus we have decided to publish an electronic version as a supplement to the print edition, to be purchased only in addition. The words of Qohelet are quoted in the hope of justifying our decision.

Ken Saito
Osaka
August 11, 2010

Postscript

In the very morning of the day on which we were to deliver the materials for this volume of *SCIAMVS* to the printer, I received the sad news that Ian Mueller had suddenly passed away. He was a great specialist of the history of Greek mathematics and, with his death, scholarship on the ancient exact sciences has suffered a true loss. I am grateful for the insight he has brought me and will miss his presence among us.