

ACS MEMBERSHIP BULLETIN NO 10 - JUNE 2011



Post-AGM discussions on ACS Publications

After the AGM and Annual Lunch on 26 March at Derby, a discussion was held on the topic of Cricket Publications. Chris Saunders began by giving a bookseller's perspective on the current market. He explained how he had first got into the business, and how significant changes had taken place in recent years. With advice from E.K.Brown, he had developed a speciality in cricket, having opened a second-hand bookshop in Wells in Somerset, before diversifying his interests into publishing limited editions and bibliographies.

John Bryant then outlined the approach of the ACS as a publisher, namely producing books of interest or value to members, offering an opportunity for worthwhile projects which were unlikely to be published commercially, and broadly covering the costs of publication. He reminded the meeting that the following four main categories of publication currently existed:

- (a) *The Cricket Statistician*, which is a benefit of membership and paid for by fees.
- (b) The Lives in Cricket series, which is well-received by members and (sometimes) more widely, besides covering its costs well.
- (c) One-off publications which, by definition, are isolated projects where the ACS aim to clear costs and usually do. If a project were to make a significant loss the implications are limited.
- (d) Scorecard-based and statistical publications, which have been undertaken virtually since the foundation of the Association. They generally form substantial series, e.g. Greens (54 to date) and the Year Book (26th edition in 2011), but sales are tending to decline, especially the *Overseas First-Class Annual* (with a serious fall from 2009 to 2010) and the Minor Counties series.

John spelled out the harsh economics of cricket publishing, namely:

- 2009: Income £45,480; Expenditure £46,367; ACS overall surplus £66
- 2010: Income £47,663; Expenditure £52,527; ACS overall deficit £5,821

Next, he discussed what the Association might do, and began by stressing that there was no need to panic as the ACS remains financially strong. John summarised the consultation with members undertaken during 2010, which had shown that scorecard-based and

statistical publications were still valued, that the Internet and print were seen as complementary, not alternatives, and that in general - with some exceptions - members tended to support the focus on first-class cricket.

He suggested five options for the future:

1. Continue broadly as now but subsidise from reserves (the committee does not recommend this approach).
2. Continue broadly as now but limit print runs and increase prices so that costs are covered.
3. A 'subscription' approach for some books, with paid orders taken in advance of printing.
4. Produce fewer titles and accept there will be gaps in coverage.
5. Cease to produce scorecard-based and statistical publications.

John finished by outlining a number of other issues, including the availability of ACS publications through commercial channels e.g. Amazon. He also stressed that normal commercial practice assumes a huge discount between trade price and cover price, and how ACS cover prices do not allow for this, whilst any increase in cover prices could be off-set by a large discount for members.

A discussion then followed with the Chairman reiterating how important it was that ACS members should get the benefit of lower prices through the Association's normal channels, rather than going to commercial outlets where lower prices were offered.

Chris O'Brien then suggested saving the costs of typesetting and printing by making available on the ACS website a downloadable pdf version of certain publications. Peter Griffiths explained in more detail the procedures which would be needed, but stressed that some costs for typesetting and layout would still be incurred.

Douglas Miller stressed the need for a Marketing Manager who could draft suitable strategies for the promotion of publications, besides assisting with decisions over the size of print runs and prices. Pelham Barton added that the production of books was a core activity and that a small increase in subscriptions would help to cover these publication costs. Howard Clayton supported the notion of a subscription-based route for some publications besides asking if ceasing the publication of scorecard-based and statistical books would affect the Association's standing with MCC, the ICC and the ECB.

Malcolm Lorimer felt that OFCA, the Year Book and other statistics-rich books could be made available either on a CD or in a cheaper, loose-leaf format. Peter Griffiths also made the point that one of the remits of the Association was the publication of new research, and that it was this category of publication which should be subsidised as the information was not readily available elsewhere. John Bryant then raised a point he had received from John Ward about the value of books collating overseas scores, before Martin Wilson asked a question about how the committee currently decided on the price of publications. The Chairman outlined the current procedures before closing the meeting and thanking everyone for their useful contributions to the discussion.

Committee Feedback

Informed by this debate, the committee discussed this topic further at its April meeting.

After taking account of views expressed by members and reviewing sales and production costs, the committee agreed that the *Overseas First-Class Annual 2011* would appear as usual in September and reaffirmed the Association's commitment to other scorecard-based and statistical series such as the Year Book, Second Eleven Annual and Minor Counties series, although subject to price increases where necessary to take account of lower sales. It was noted that the long-running 'Green' series would soon reach 1925 (due December 2011): since scores from 1926 to 1939 have already been covered by the Ledbetter series, it was agreed that the 'Green' series would continue in June 2012 with a volume covering 1939/40 to 1945.

It was agreed that the sales of *Overseas Scores 2007/08* did not justify the production of the projected further volume covering 2006/07. The possibility of resuming the former series covering Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe and Bangladesh was also discussed. It was agreed to leave this on hold whilst monitoring sales of the *Overseas First-Class Annual*, which would help to assess the appetite for printed versions of first-class scores otherwise available only online.

Committee Meetings

The **sixth meeting of 2010/11** was held at the Space Centre, London, on Saturday 29 January. Apologies were received from Ric Finlay and David Jeater.

The committee considered the Association's overall publications strategy, and the areas raising particular difficulties were examined. It was agreed that the publications strategy should be discussed with the members at the AGM in March. Further arrangements for the conduct and business of the AGM were agreed.

The Spring issue of *The Cricket Statistician* was being typeset by Imprint Services. Imprint and other typesetters would be invited to enter a formal tendering process for subsequent issues.

It was agreed to establish an essay prize for an article on a statistical or historical subject, to be named the Don Ambrose Memorial Prize in honour of the late ACS member Mr Ambrose.

John Bryant had begun to work on updating the ACS website, and the most urgent priorities for him to address were agreed.

The **first meeting of 2011/12** was held at the Gateway Centre, Derby, on Saturday 26 March after the AGM. Apologies were received from Ric Finlay. Peter Griffiths also attended the first part of the meeting.

David Kendix stood down as Chairman, and Roger Moulton was unanimously elected to succeed him.

The committee discussed with Mr Griffiths continuing problems in bringing ACS books to publication and their subsequent marketing. It was agreed that the responsibilities of the publications subcommittee needed to be more clearly defined.

It had been decided that *The Cricket Statistician* should be typeset by Imprint Services for the next two years.

The **second meeting of 2011/12** was held at the Space Centre, London, on Saturday 30 April. Apologies were received from Ric Finlay, Roger Gibbons and Huw Nathan.

The committee agreed that an individual committee liaison should be appointed to oversee each book or series published by the ACS and liaise with the relevant authors, in an attempt to keep better track of their progress.

The committee considered issues concerning future publications strategy arising from the discussion with members at the AGM (reported elsewhere in this Bulletin).

The date for the 2012 AGM was provisionally set at 31 March, in Derby. It was hoped to hold a London meeting in November 2011.

The dates for the next committee meetings are 16 July, 24 September and 3 December. Any member wishing to raise any matter should contact the Secretary.

Guide for Authors

The Members' area of the ACS website (www.acscricket.com) has now been updated to contain the following:

- The ACS Style Guide, to which all future publications should adhere.
- Legal Guidelines for Authors, covering advice on how to avoid libel, copyright and plagiarism issues.

All current or prospective authors of ACS publications are asked to refer to these documents. Paper copies are available from the Secretary.

County A-Z

A long term project is to produce a substantial biographical A-Z for each of the English first-class counties. Work on Kent is already well advanced, with significant new material having been unearthed on several lesser-known former players. Some early progress has been made elsewhere. Any member who would like to help compile one of these volumes is requested to contact the Secretary.