

## **The *MEXTESOL Journal*: 2011 to the Present Responding to the Demands and Evolving Growth: Martha's Reflections on Working on the MEXTESOL Journal**

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In this article I will describe about how I started working on the *MEXTESOL Journal* (MJ) as a reviewer and later as the present Editor-in-Chief of the *MEXTESOL Journal*. I will reflect upon the changes that have taken place during this time. This narrative will explore how the MJ has changed for various reasons and my position within this time frame. This article also serves to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *MEXTESOL Journal*.

I moved to Mexico from the Midwest of the United States as a young adult and quickly I got a job as an English teacher at the Language Center of the University of Guanajuato because I was in the right place at the right time and because I am a native speaker. I taught the best I could for many years and then in 1993 I went to Morgantown, West Virginia to study a master's in TESOL at West Virginia University. I was given a scholarship from the federal government for graduate degrees. I remember finishing up my degree in TESOL and heading back to Guanajuato with a number of my academic papers I had written for my courses. Wondering what to do with these papers, I decided to adapt some of these papers to articles. I submitted a few and began to publish little by little. Publishing at that period of my life was not needed and it was not common.

Enter JoAnn Miller, then the Editor-in Chief, into my life. She has come into the lives of many. At that point I remember very well receiving a phone call (pre-internet days) from JoAnn in the teachers' room during the work hours. She told me I was going to have one of my first articles published in MJ. I was quite pleased to receive this news and it was at a period of time when there were no pressures to publish. Once receiving the call, I did not know how to tell anyone this news so I did not tell anyone at work. At that period, teaching was what one did and that was it. Some time went by and a couple more articles were published and JoAnn asked me to attend a MEXTESOL Conference and go to the reviewers' meeting. I went to Zacatecas and was somewhat thunder struck to be with a group of people who reviewed articles for MJ. This group seemed so academic and knowledgeable. To be honest, I did not feel comfortable and I even felt like a fish out of water. This period was a learning experience to understand what an article consisted of, what a refereed article was, what a non-refereed article was, what a deadline meant and the what process of editing was all about. I was quite vulnerable and insecure as a writer, but I did enjoy seeing my name in print and there were not a lot of people who published in my school. I started to feel on the edge of an academic community, not quite part of it, but almost entering the door.

I accepted to review articles for the MJ and this was a type of work I enjoyed. It is solitary and requires dedication and lots of reading and editing. As a reviewer I was part

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of the Editorial Board and I reviewed more or less two articles a year, proofing and giving feedback to authors. I continued writing other types of articles, such as book reviews and other small methodology articles. I think this work was helpful after my master's because I continued on my academic journey. I had to read more and more which led me to become updated in our profession.

Another period of my life began when I began my doctoral studies, again with a federal scholarship. Many others in Mexico were also studying at a master's and doctoral level. I continued to be a reviewer while I was pursuing my doctorate and those hours of editing and reading were helpful in my studies. One year I was the Guest Editor of the *Special Issue: Teacher Education* (2004, Vol. 27, No. 3). I would like to thank Ezmerelda Kornmeyer, who was the Style Editor. This was probably when I learned how to put together an issue from day one until the end of the published issue, as well as the complexities of the complete process. In 2008 I became the Associate Editor of Refereed Articles and Saul Santos was the Associate Editor of Non-refereed Articles under the guidance of Uli Schrader, the Editor-in-Chief at that time. More lessons of editing and publishing were attained. I am thankful for these lessons from Uli and Saul. It is during this time I also began to work with others in the MJ as group.

During the MEXTESOL Conference each year, the editors and the members of the Editorial Board would always get together. Throughout the years I organized a panel discussion on writing and publishing and now Ma. Guadalupe Rodriguez has taken on this task. This panel was to promote writing, publishing, and the *MEXTESOL Journal*. I also petitioned with Peter Hubbard to have the Editorial Board members receive a waiver for the MEXTESOL Conference. One year at the Editorial meeting in the conference in Monterrey, I remember Uli announced that he was stepping down as the Editor-in-Chief and he asked if anyone one was interested in the position. It was quite silent for a couple of long minutes. I was somewhat hesitant, but I said I was interested. I was accepted for the position and started working closely with JoAnn Miller. In 2011 I began as the Editor-in-Chief with Volume 35 No. 1. My partners in crime were JoAnn Miller, Associate Editor for Refereed Articles and Ma. Guadalupe Rodriguez Bulnes, Associate Editor for Non-refereed Articles. JoAnn has been played an instrumental part of the journal and also my being involved in the MJ. Like Connie R. Johnson, I appreciate JoAnn's invitations and confidence in me.

Taking over the *MEXTESOL Journal* meant that I had to reflect upon its status and history and then envision what was needed. A lot of work was required in order to make changes. One problem at that time was fact that the MJ was printed on paper and then delivered to the members of the MEXTESOL Association. Many of the issues did not arrive to people throughout Mexico and in the United States. They were packed away in the MEXTESOL offices for years. I myself did not receive my issues in Guanajuato. The process of printing the journal on paper was time consuming and expensive. I had the idea it was printed in the north of Mexico and that meant that there were shipping costs to send it to Mexico City and even more shipping costs to send it to the members. This was not an effective way and at the same time the internet was becoming more and more popular. The Editorial Board discussed this issue for a number of years and JoAnn and I proposed the change from printing up MJ on paper to putting it on line and having free access to anyone is the world. This freed us up as far as money and sending out the

issues. It definitely made our lives easier but more importantly anyone could access the journal. This was what we felt was important. We started up a site and quickly uploaded some of the issues we had. Little by little we have tried to upload other issues of the forty years. One important person who dedicated his time to setting up the site is Rafael Peña-Miller. Immense gratitude goes to him for his patience and commitment to maintain the site.

There was some resistance to this move because the paper version was seen perhaps as a perk when people registered as a MEXTESOL member. I tend to be a pragmatic person and it was obvious what was needed. Another step that was taken was carrying out the process to be an indexed journal. I went through this process and would like to do more in this area in the future. Uli made the necessary changes to change the number from a printed journal to a digital journal. I am indebted to his diligence in achieving this task.

Being an open access journal broadened our readership to many parts of the world. With the site we can see the statistics of where people come from when they access an article. Our articles have come from: Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Iran, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Taiwan, UK, US, to name only a few. We can see which article is accessed more. This information helps us to see how we have progressed.

The MJ has made changes as a journal to meet the demands of what is happening in Mexico and the world. In the last couple of years we have had to look for more quantitative readers because of an influx of international articles in this area. From here, we have had to revamp our editorial board to meet these demands. An increase for more refereed articles has been noticed because now most university professors in Mexico need to publish and more specifically they need to publish refereed articles. This was not the case when I started to publish my articles. University professors need to publish because they may be in the *Sistema Nacional de Investigadores* (SNI) of CONACYT or the *Programa para el Desarrollo Profesional Docente* (PRODEP). But at the same time we did not want to lower our non-refereed articles. In 2015, Josefina C. Santana (Universidad Panamericana) became the Associate Editor for Non-refereed Articles (Vol. 39, No. 2). She began her column "Dixie Dixit", which comes out in every issue. JoAnn started the idea of republishing MJ's articles from well-known authors and *voilà* we had vintage articles. Ruth Ban (Barry University) is now the Book Review Editor. Again this shows how the MJ has made changes.

I invite you to take a look at the website ([www.mextesol.net](http://www.mextesol.net)) and the archives where you can appreciate the authors we have had throughout the years. When you visit the archives, you will notice how we have tried to publish more issues each year. For the last two years we now have had four issues. In the archives we are missing some issues and we ask people to look in their school libraries and in their personal libraries to see if any of the missing issues are found. This would be greatly appreciated if you could send us these missing issues so that we can complete the archives.

JoAnn Miller also started the *MEXTESOL Journal* Facebook group and our number of members is growing as I write this article. This number has risen to more than 1,600 members Thanks go to JoAnn for starting this group and for the teachers who want to join our group.

There are many people to thank for their guidance and support and what can be appreciated is that working on the *MEXTESOL Journal* is teamwork with the help of many individuals and with an objective in mind. For me I appreciate the backing of JoAnn Miller, Uli Schrader, Ma. Guadalupe Rodriguez Bulnes, Josefina C. Santana, the Editorial Board, and many others. Without this type of work, we would never have survived the forty years that we are celebrating in 2016. I have learned valuable lessons on how to write, publish, edit, and meet deadlines. I have continuously updated myself as a professional because of the writing, publishing and reading I have had to do.

It has been a pleasure to be part of the MJ and I invite the readers to think of how they can contribute to the MJ and their profession. I challenge you to try to write an article for the MJ. Articles in English or Spanish are accepted. Leafing through the archives of the *MEXTESOL Journal* shows how our profession has evolved and how an individual can also evolve with an organization such as MJ. Looking back on this, I am no longer the same person who began in this profession when I moved to Mexico and I am witness to how our profession has changed and the MJ has been part of this evolution. Happy 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and many more.