Life is just what happens to you while you’re busy making other plans” is still one of my favorite John Lennon lyrics.

At times, this quote carries a definite positive meaning, for instance to portray what happened to an idea about starting a Workshop in Brussels – and to call it ISCRAM – that gradually evolved into an international community with a journal for which I am now writing this very editorial. At other times, it can mean that reality catches up with me and brings me to – instantly or painfully slowly – trash carefully developed plans.

Surprisingly perhaps, the genesis of the IJISCRAM journal fits squarely in the second category. Together with several fellow ISCRAM members, I contemplated the idea of starting a journal for this community. Using Benjamin Franklin’s original decision method, I carefully wrote down the pros and cons in respectively a left and a right column, crossing out those arguments in either column that held equal value until only one argument (in either the pro or con column) was left to support the ‘go’ or ‘no go’ decision.

Not surprisingly perhaps, I usually ended up with a last remaining negative argument telling me not to go ahead. Until the day Murray Jennex told me, in his telling and straightforward way: “let’s just do it”. Through Murray’s contacts with this publisher – Murray was already EiC of the international journal of Knowledge Management with the same publisher – things went very fast from there. The first issue of the journal was published within months from the moment the decision was made.

You are now reading the second issue. Once again Murray and I are happy to be able to offer you papers and reports indicative of the variety of activities and research within the ISCRAM community. Papers for the subsequent issues are also coming in steadily, indicating that the journal is indeed fulfilling the needs we discussed in the first issue’s editorial.

As was stressed in the first editorial, our key objective is to develop a high-quality journal that offers relevant and rigorous research in the ISCRAM domain. In particular, our ambition is for papers published in this journal to count for tenure decisions. This requires, among others, the active help of a reputable editorial review board. If you have not checked this yet, please have a look at the names of the people who accepted to serve on this board. I think you will agree that we have a highly regarded editorial team.

This journal is however not only about papers. It is also very much about people – the members of the review board, the authors who contribute their experiences and research, the reviewers who assess the contributions received, and readers like you who read the papers that are published.
The remarkable thing, in this day and age, is that most of these people remain invisible to each other. Admittedly, in the older days, that was unavoidable. It took months – if not years – to get a paper to print, after a lengthy and anonymous review process. Usually there was no way for an author to know how many people actually read his or her paper, if any. In the current Internet-era, new publishing paradigms have been established, with smaller or larger modifications of the traditional academic publishing model, its review and reading processes.

A most remarkable evolution on the web in the last few years, is the rise and growth of social websites – the immensely popular ‘myspace’, ‘facebook’, ‘hi5’ and ‘linked-in’ sites to which millions of people have subscribed, contributed and, in quite a few cases, developed a genuine addiction to.

While the initial user/subscriber/member age demographics were well below the average age of the more experienced emergency manager or researcher, this is not longer the case today. On the ‘Facebook’ network, for instance, today over 150 ISCRAM members - of all ages - have joined the ISCRAM group. The group therefore offers an impressive range of knowledge and experience, ranging from novice to expert, with interests varying from mobile technology for social change to sensor networks and a geographic range from South-Africa to Sri Lanka.

At an ever increasing rate, new “web 2.0” applications are being developed that introduce social networking into all aspects of society – including science. ISCRAM Live is such an application, bringing together contributions of ISCRAM members that have been published on web 2.0 websites. Have a look at http://www.iscram.org/live if you have not done so yet, and start contributing to this dynamic site.

The challenge ahead is to connect established academic publishing, as exemplified in this very journal, to this newly emerging social science network. If we succeed, we would – at last – make visible the people now veiled by the publishing process, and connect them, with each other and the rest of the world, in order for their knowledge to be exposed, recognized and discussed.

Let us start moving away from the “publish only” scientific community we have become, and rediscover the spirit of scientific exploration, by sharing insights and, perhaps most importantly, the sheer excitement of discovery.

Therefore, I wish you not only a most enjoyable reading of this issue of IJISCRAM, I also cordially invite you to join the ISCRAM group on Facebook and to start using ISCRAM Live.

Best regards,
Bartel Van de Walle

ENDNOTES

1 For those curious to know, this quote is from the song “beautiful boy” on Lennon’s Double Fantasy album released in 1980.

2 Benjamin Franklin in a letter to the British scientist Joseph Priestly, written on 19 September 1772.