

Sirkka-Liisa Leinonen

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Sirkka-Liisa Leinonen retired as managing editor of the *European Journal of Neurology* at the end of 2014. She took up her position with the journal on 15 March 2004. This was the first time she had worked in the field of publishing and so naturally she began with some anxiety and trepidation, not knowing at that time that she was to become one of the very best in her newly chosen field.

She had worked as a freelance translator and then as a co-owner of a small but very successful translation agency. In 2004 Matti Hillbom, the Professor of Neurology at the University Hospital in Oulu, Finland, was asked to serve as Co-Editor-in-Chief of the *European Journal of Neurology* and he needed a managing editor to work with him. He was already a customer of Sirkka-Liisa's translation company in Oulu, and so knew of the outstanding quality of her work. He came to her office to seek a recommendation of someone fluent in English who could take the position. This visit coincided with Sirkka-Liisa's growing desire to try something new and, although she knew nothing of scientific publishing and had never met Matti before, she jumped at the opportunity for a new challenge.

Initially she worked part-time as in 2004 there was already another editorial team in Paris, and she was assured there would be only a couple of new submissions per week. It did not sound daunting, and it really was not for the first year or so.

Matti Hillbom's co-editor resigned just over a year later, and Matti continued as the sole editor for about a year. The next big changes took place in 2006. First, the journal migrated from version 2 of Manuscript Central to version 4.0, which was a complete overhaul of the online manuscript management system. Secondly, Tony Schapira was appointed Co-Editor-in-Chief and there followed a number of changes that set the journal on the road to success. Eight new editors were appointed from Europe, Asia and North America, to develop a global presence for the journal. Seven of these editors still work for the journal, and a new editor, Dr Meschia in the USA, was appointed in 2014. This is the team responsible for the journal's transformation, growth and development.

When Sirkka-Liisa started working for the journal in 2004 it received only 600 submissions per year.



More than half of these were Letters to the Editor or Short Communications. Original Articles were a minority, and there were only a few Review Articles. The new strategy developed in 2007 was to reverse this, base the journal on Original Articles, and to develop it as a major journal of clinical neurology and as the official journal of the then European Federation of Neurological Societies.

Ten years later in 2014, the journal received more than 1500 submissions. Letters and Short Communications accounted for only 25% of the combined number of Original Articles and Reviews. There are now 35 000 names in the journal's author and reviewer database. There are submissions from 90 different countries. The journal impact factor has increased from 2.2 to 4.2. Given the rapid rise in submissions, triage evaluation had to be initiated in 2013 to screen out more than half of new submissions in order to focus peer review. In 2014 the European Academy of Neurology was formed and the *European Journal of Neurology* became its official journal.

Throughout all these dramatic changes, Sirkka-Liisa has run what became the only journal office after that in Paris closed in 2006. Any short period away had to be covered by locum agencies. The editorial team came to understand and value her immense contribution to the smooth running of the journal and she became indispensable to its success. She has always been available to help solve problems, organize and compile the information necessary to understand how to keep the journal on

track. She told us, 'I very much enjoyed my time with the journal! There were always new things to learn, new problems to solve and interesting people to work with. When I was 55 years old, life gave me the tremendous opportunity to learn something completely new. I hope I will have a similar opportunity now that I am 66 years old. I look forward to having more time to spend with family and friends and do the things I like, such as reading, writing, photography, travelling and the simple pleasures of outdoor life. I do not rule out interesting part-time employment or small projects. Life has been generous to me up until this time. I hope it will continue to be so even in the future.' Sirkka-Liisa's position has now been taken by PrePress in the UK, who we are confident will be able to continue her legacy.

I am sure that all our readers, authors, the whole editorial team and the Officers and Members of the EAN will join us in thanking Sirkka-Liisa for her wonderful work and commitment to the journal and wish her success, pleasure and fulfilment in the coming years.

Disclosure of conflicts of interest

The authors declare no financial or other conflicts of interest.

A. H. V. Schapira^a, A. Albanese^b, M. Brainin^c, C. Davie^d, S. Juvela^e, M. Leone^f, J. Meschia^g, P. Saloheimo^h, E.-K. Tanⁱ and Z. Wszolek^g

^aDepartment of Clinical Neurosciences, UCL Institute of Neurology, London, UK; ^bDepartment of Neurology, Istituto Neurologico Carlo Besta, Milano, Italy; ^cCenter Clinical Neurosciences, Danube University, Krems, Austria; ^dNeuroscience Department, Royal Free Hospital, London, UK; ^eDepartment of Clinical Neurosciences, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland; ^fClinica Neurologica, IRCSS Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza, San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy; ^gDepartment of Neurology, Mayo Clinic, Jacksonville, FL, USA; ^hDuodecim Medical Journal, Helsinki, Finland and ⁱDepartment of Neurology, Singapore General Hospital, Singapore City, Singapore
(e-mail: a.schapira@ucl.ac.uk)