

No tweets in store

The morphing of social networking sites into the self-promoting and exclusionary ego-trips represented by 'tweets' was anticipated by sociologist Philip Slater (*The Pursuit of Loneliness* 1970). He raised the alarm that through technology we have developed the means to avoid contact with others and the responsibilities that attend social life. The end-game of unfettered selfishness was a sense of uncaring or frustrated isolation, a socio-psychological state of norm-less malaise that Mauss and Durkheim recognised as anomie. Why mention these sociologists in this editorial? Well, it's personal. I've recently reviewed papers for several well known journals and submitted a couple of papers too; the anonymity of the process has left me feeling confused. The journals, all owned by large conglomerates, provide an efficient service with standardised review forms that enable me to tick a few boxes, enter a brief comment, and submit. Job done, but the brief moment of satisfaction is undermined by the near instant return by email of an impersonal 'personal' thank you letter from the editor. If you decline to review, the response is equally instant and somewhat insistent, asking for an explanation and requesting contact details of alternative reviewers. You, the expert, are reduced to the proverbial cog, or that's how it feels.

Happily, not all journals are run this way, and we pride ourselves that *Before Farming* – in the spirit of small-scale hunter-gatherer societies – remains dedicated to personal contact. We work with our contributors should their work be rejected or heavily criticised to suggest ways forward, and encourage reviewers to be thoughtful rather than efficient. It's a time consuming process, and sometimes we miss our own publication targets as a result. The personal touch though leads to an often quirky as well as eclectic mix of papers which is, as I've said before, our strength in a world of atomisation through specialisation. The papers in this bespoke issue continue our series on mid-Holocene adaptations in the Americas. The authors are part of an inclusive community dedicated to understanding the great variability in human responses to local climate change, but also seeking larger patterns that may have wider application in the field of hunter-gatherer archaeology. No tweeting here.

The Editor
Liverpool, February 2009