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Editorial

Taking stock after four years

Christopher Kuner*, Fred H. Cate**, Christopher Millard**,
and Dan Jerker B. Svantesson***

Though it is sometimes hard for us to believe, four years have passed since the first issue of *IDPL* was published in early 2011. There have been many important developments in the world of data protection and privacy law during this time, and, we like to think, our journal has become an established part of the landscape. Though we usually devote these editorials to considering substantive legal developments, we would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the last four years, and what lies ahead, both for *IDPL* in particular and for privacy law scholarship in general.

We are proud that *IDPL* has become recognized as a leading journal in its field. It remains (to our knowledge) the only English-language journal exclusively devoted to data protection and privacy law that has a global perspective and subjects all published articles to double-blind peer review. We would like to think that *IDPL* makes a continuing contribution to the recognition of data privacy law as an important field of scholarly inquiry.

We have tried to keep the global importance of the subject in mind by also publishing articles covering the law of countries and regions outside of Europe and North America. Thus, we have been pleased to publish articles on jurisdictions such as Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, China, Malaysia, Mauritius, Nepal, Trinidad and Tobago, and others about which it has traditionally been difficult to find reliable information in English. Indeed, we consciously chose the title ‘International *Data Privacy Law*’ in order to avoid terminology that might seem focused too much on a particular legal system, and to demonstrate the global importance of the topic.

We are also glad to have been able to cover a number of ‘hot topics’; perhaps the best example of this has been the series of articles we published about public sector access to private data under the law of a number of countries (a comparative analysis is included in this issue). We will continue to cover, and when possible anticipate, topics of current interest.

We are obviously a subscription journal, which allows the good people at Oxford University Press to invest in the resources necessary to produce a high-quality publication. However, we are aware of our responsibility to make our content available to the wider scholarly community, and thus make at least one article of each issue freely available for download on the Internet (in addition to these editorials, which are always freely available); from time to time we have also made entire issues downloadable for free. We are also pleased to have joined one of the OUP scholarly ‘bundles’, so that *IDPL* is now available to thousands of libraries worldwide.

It is perhaps useful for readers and potential contributors to address some questions that are often posed to us. One is what the deadline is for submitting an article; the answer is that, since we publish quarterly, we have a constant interest in quality submissions, so that contributors need not worry about missing a deadline. Once articles have been copyedited and typeset, they are placed in the “Advance Access” section of our website, and are thus available online in advance of publication in a particular issue of *IDPL*.

We are also asked how ‘legal’ a submission should be. We are a legal journal, and expect submissions to focus on legal issues. However, this does not mean that we will not consider articles that are not solely concerned with the law, as long as they deal with jurisprudential, policy, or regulatory issues. Indeed, we believe that questions lying at the intersection of data privacy law and other areas are often among the most interesting subjects for scholarly investigation.

In this regard, we would also emphasize that, despite our commitment to quality scholarship, we are not a typical ‘law review’ in terms of publishing length, often ponderous, pieces with hundreds of footnotes. While we expect submissions to be properly footnoted (details of which can be found in our ‘Instructions to Authors’ document on the web site), we disfavour obscure

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language, overly technical discussion, and other types of writing that would make an article not understandable to an intelligent reader from another discipline. We would also remind readers that we provide three categories of potential contributions: articles, shorter comment pieces, and ‘tomorrow’s privacy’ pieces that are more in the nature of guest editorials. We are increasing the number of book reviews in *IDPL*, and encourage authors and publishers to contact us if there is a book they would like to see reviewed.

In conclusion, we believe that *IDPL* has helped establish data privacy law as a valuable subject of legal scholarship, but that much remains to be done. Privacy law scholarship is in some ways still too parochial, in that there is not enough concern with topics of comparative and foreign law. We would also like to see more publications from authors outside the ‘privacy law community’, as we believe that they can often bring a fresh perspective that we may

lack. At the same time, we are heartened by the number of high-quality submissions we now receive, and also by the number of excellent young authors who submit articles to us, both of which are signs that data privacy law is ‘picking up steam’ as an important scholarly discipline. We would also like to express our appreciation for the enormous contribution made by the peer reviewers whom we carefully select to review submissions, and without whom publication of *IDPL* would not be possible.

We will do everything we can to see that both *IDPL*, and data privacy law, are strengthened in the coming years, and thank our readers, subscribers, and authors in particular for their continued support. Our ears and minds are always open for any comments, criticisms, and even positive feedback.

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