IN THIS MY FIRST YEAR AS REVIEW EDITOR I WOULD LIKE TO THANK BOTH William F.E. Morley, my predecessor and founding Review Editor, for his advice and support, and Elizabeth Hulse, the Editor of the Papers, for her patient understanding of the problems of a neophyte. Naturally, gratitude is also extended to the contributors whose reviews appear below.

As I am currently updating the reviewers file, I would appreciate hearing from additional qualified individuals willing to review new publications in their disciplines. Any suggestions of items suitable for review are most welcome, and publishers are encouraged to send copies of works of bibliographical interest to the Review Editor.

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As its title suggests, Martin Lowry's study of Aldus is only incidentally bibliographical. Lowry is mostly concerned with investigating Aldus' milieu and the printer's place within it, and as such The World of Aldus Manutius is largely aimed at the debunking of myths. Lowry is neither a bibliographer nor a classicist; indeed, he makes disparaging remarks about the practitioners of both disciplines early in the book. He is an historian, rather, and his inclination is to reject as the dogma of tradition, rather than hard fact, much of the genuflecting with which posterity has approached Aldus. Aldus' principal claims to enduring fame—his classical texts, his typefaces, the use of the octavo format, the establishment of the New Academy—all come in for some hard knocks; and if, in the end, Lowry comes out in support of the contention that places Aldus at the very centre of the achievements of the Renaissance, along the way not a few sacred cows of printing and bibliographical scholarship are sent to the slaughter.

Scholars who venture into the domain of other specialists take obvious risks. What is to be gained—as Lowry is at pains to point out—is a fresh investigation of much-treaded material. Lowry, though not a bibliographer, is otherwise superbly qualified for his task: he is a scholar of early Venetian history and is competent in the half-dozen languages that are a sinequanon for research in early printing. The results, if not always favourable to Aldus' reputation, are consistently refreshing and interesting. This is so despite the fact that documentary evidence for Aldus' career is pitifully meagre, excepting, of course, the books themselves.

It is impossible to enumerate all of Lowry's conclusions in the space available here, so an example must suffice. The chapter on Aldus' abilities as an editor and textual critic points out that Aldine texts, though neither uniformly bad nor good, are not as scholarly as has often been contended. This was not wholly the fault of the printer. Certain manuscripts were simply not available to him, and textual scholarship was still barely recognized as a science. It is usually assumed, however, that part of Aldus' advantages as a printer of Greek texts was the accessibility of manuscripts that his location in Venice afforded. It comes as a surprise, therefore, to learn that Aldus seems to have made no use of the manuscript collection bequeathed to the Republic by Cardinal Bessarion (the Marcian Library). Aldus frequently made complicated efforts to locate ostensibly unique exemplars of the text of a particular author, when in some cases superior copies lay resting unused quite literally just down the street. In addition, as Lowry points out, emendations were too often made on a haphazard basis and there are more examples of compositorial mistakes than can be excused in the texts of a printer who offered a reward to anyone who could spot errors in his work.