

*Volume 3, Issue 1*

## ACCESSING KNOWLEDGE

What do internet activist Aaron Swartz, actress Angelina Jolie and anthropologist Marshall Sahlins have in common? At first glance: not very much. But they have all been in the media this year because of issues that can be seen as linked to accessing knowledge. Should all authors retain their copyright so that information is freely accessible to everyone on the internet? What are the ethical implications of going public about one's decision for a preventive double mastectomy based on genetic testing? Should scientists use their expert knowledge for the greater good of society - and how?

The present issue endeavours to tickle your mind through exploring the difficulties of providing straightforward answers to such questions. Acero Araluce thus discusses whether knowledge accessible on the internet has more benefits than drawbacks for the global social fabric. The common assumption that information received from genetic testing necessarily confronts patients with heavy ethical dilemmas is challenged by Flaherty, who shows that some U.S. patients perceived it as bringing them a sense of certainty, rather than an ethical burden. And our reliance on expert knowledge is questioned by Bloemen in her investigation of the representation of radiation risk by scientists in the UK.

In a similar way, by drawing on its fieldwork among the Mapuche in southern Chile, Gonzalez-Galvez encourages us not to take for granted that what we mean by 'knowledge' is universally the same - suggesting that a different definition may no longer pose a problem in terms of its access. On the other hand, Melia demonstrates how access to historical knowledge can make us better appreciate the historical position of Brazilian slaves - uncovering an autonomy that is admittedly limited, yet nevertheless present.

The pieces by van Roekel and Nørtoft & Hansen put forward different avenues for anthropologists to access the knowledge they seek from their interlocutors in the field, either through Argentines' use of humour or through the anthropologist's employment of film clips to provoke discussion among Copenhagen's elderly population. Last but not least, Gould demonstrates that anthropology can indeed make itself better understood by its student body - and beyond - through the innovative medium of an exhibition which engages tangibly with its audience.

We hope you will find this issue of *The Unfamiliar* - to which open access is provided, as always, by the University of Edinburgh - an enjoyable read, and that browsing it you will stumble across some new and perhaps thought-provoking knowledge!

*Srit Wesser & Jona Fras*