

**arq**'s first editor returns to the origins of the journal and reflects on the period of his editorship from 1994–2003. The journal's founding principles remain just as urgent today.

## In uncharted waters

Peter Carolin

**arq**'s first editor, Peter Carolin, reflects below on the origins of the journal and its founding principles. His opening 'leader' in **arq** 1:1, titled 'Launching the arq', set out its distinctive position. It's worth reprinting the text of that 'leader' here, to which Carolin returns below, as a reminder of the ongoing aims of the journal and to set the context for his reflections. His text emphasises how **arq** emerged out of a distinctive set of conditions in the UK at that time:

Architectural Research Quarterly (**arq**) represents a stand against the new tendency to devalue and compartmentalise architectural research. We subscribe to the view, which Francis Duffy encapsulates [...], that architectural knowledge is an 'integrating, value laden, holistic, design related, user responsive, inventive and entirely distinctive mode of thought'. Buildings are central to this, but theory, history, environmental and structural design, construction and information technology, management and much else contribute to the whole. We intend to publish the best available research on all these subjects.

But why should we publish at all? What is a refereed journal? And isn't a journal filled with research papers a recipe for dullness? First, we believe there is much excellent research for which there is no effective outlet. Professional journals can no longer afford to devote many pages of text to a single feature; **arq** can do so. Second, it has become essential for academics to publish in journals in which contributions are the subject of peer review rather than editorial decision. Every paper published in **arq** will have been vetted by two persons expert in the subject under review. Third, **arq** is pro-active. We are not just waiting for papers to drop through our letter box, we are searching them out [...].

In time, we hope that much of the research which we publish will be written not only by academics but also by practitioners. Outstanding student work will be welcomed. The composition of our Editorial Board, a mix of academics and practitioners, architects, engineers and others, is a reflection of our determination to include all those who have a contribution to make to the theory and practice of architecture and the quality of the built environment.

At the time of writing, **arq** had received nearly 120 papers and outlines since the decision was made, ten months ago, to publish. Many of the outlines have yet to blossom into papers, some of the papers have been rejected by referees and some have had to be returned as the realisable scope and focus of the journal has become apparent. [...] Sadly, few practitioners seem able or even willing to write about their work; there exists an excellent opportunity for academics and younger practitioners to act as disseminators or critics of research and design in practice.

Architectural research got itself a bad name in the 1970s. Much of it had little to do with practice and still less with buildings. In the 1980s, the world of academic research was turned upside down. State funding became less common and more and more research was carried out on a commercial basis for sponsors who did not wish the results to be disseminated. And in, many countries, governments started to link academic funding with research excellence. It was, in principle, a good idea.

But today, in the 1990s, architectural research (and education) are under threat. The introduction of academic funding based on research assessment exercises has created a ludicrous situation in which academics will publish before they are ready to do so and where universities will poach staff from each other in an effort to secure a higher research rating, and hence higher funding. Much that is described as research is nothing of the kind, many academics are becoming specialists in research remote from teaching, and design is discounted as a form of research. The link between research and practice is, once more, endangered.

There are no precedents for a refereed journal covering the breadth of topics included in our pages. This will be both **arq**'s strength and its weakness – strength in that it reflects the breadth and holistic nature of architecture, weakness in that not all those aspects are of interest to each specialist or even, let it be said, to some generalists. [...] Help us to shape this journal and to make it relevant, readable and controversial – a dynamic and positive contribution to the theory and practice of Architecture.

**arq** is an exception to the rule that research journals are generally initiated by academics for academics. Launched twenty-one years ago by the architectural division of a major magazine publisher, **arq** aimed to provide an outlet for – and a readership of – both academics and practitioners. The objectives – evolved in discussion with a similar group of architects and engineers – were set out in the first ‘leader’.

Things didn’t turn out as imagined. The magazine publishing house pulled the plug after eight issues and the journal went on to be published by a major university press. In the meantime, web and digital publishing have developed, the pressures of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)/Research Excellence Framework (REF) and university funding have had a major impact on architectural education, and the world of practice has become ever more competitive and, arguably, less reflective.

There have been eighty-four issues of **arq**. Of these, I was responsible for the first twenty-eight. At my own request, I have had no further involvement since handing over to Richard Weston and then Adam Sharr. Others can assess the success or otherwise of the journal – I shall limit myself to reflecting on its inception and early years.

### Answering a need

June 1994 found many architecture academics in the UK increasingly concerned about the forthcoming RAE, scheduled for March 1996. Following the collapse of the Architectural Press, the *Architects’ Journal* (AJ) and *Architectural Review* (AR) had been taken over by EMAP and no longer had the budgets to publish the kind of extended research-originated articles that had been possible in the 1980s. During that period, when I worked on the AJ, we had published work done by, for example, Bill Hillier and his Space Syntax team at the Bartlett, Dean Hawkes and Nick Baker from Cambridge on their environmental design work on Essex and Hampshire schools, and another group of Cambridge academics (Peter Blundell Jones, John Olley, Eric Parry, and others) in the *Masters of Buildings* series.

There were other peer-reviewed specialist research journals but none that covered the range of research associated with architecture. Early in June 1994, I approached Cambridge University Press (CUP) to enquire whether they might fill the gap but it was clear that the prospects there were unpromising. Later that month, Peter Davey, then Editor of the AR, wrote to say that EMAP was interested in setting up a ‘proper refereed journal for architecture and perhaps related disciplines’ and would I be interested in discussing this with them? Others were thinking along similar lines and in late July a flyer was received from Spon press, asking for comments on a similar publication to be called *Architectural Knowledge* (which emerged two years later as *The Journal of Architecture*).

In early October, after an unusually hectic



1 The **arq** first cover, 1995. Detail from Harlow housing modernisation by Florian Beigel and Philip Christou (ARU, University of North London).

summer, a full publishing proposal was sent to EMAP. This set out why a refereed journal was needed; what was currently available internationally; a vision for a journal linking research, practice and education; an outline structure and imagined contents for several issues; editorial, production, marketing, and promotion arrangements; and editorial costs. EMAP accepted the proposal in early November but expressed the desire for copy by late January so that the first issue would be available for the AJ’s centenary dinner on 8 March!

By late November, despite a good response from possible contributors and referees, it had become clear that there was no way the deadline could be met. I reported to the initiating editorial board (John Berry, Peter Blundell Jones, Dean Hawkes, M. J. Long, Sam Price, Phil Tabor, and John Worthington) that a revised copy date of late April had been agreed. We finally made it in July. **arq** volume 1, number 1 was published in late September 1995 [1]. It had, from a standing start, taken us just over a year to produce a first issue complete with letters and book reviews (and to have the following number well under way). What had made this pace of production possible was a highly proactive approach, email, word processing, and digital images (the latter three having transformed publishing since I had departed the AJ five years before).

**Structure, size, and title**

**arq** was planned as a journal for both academia and practice. It sought to embrace every aspect of architecture and to include as wide a range as possible of these aspects in each issue together with at least one architectural design or completed building. In order to emphasise this policy, each issue was structured into clearly identified sections. The sections at the front and end – letters, issues, documents, reviews, and insight – were not refereed. The middle sections were all double blind-refereed and ‘design’ always ran first. A reader with particular areas of interest could easily identify the relevant articles by looking at the contents page or just flipping through, glancing at the signposting.

By December 1996 our master list had 250 papers in various stages of discussion, production, publication, or rejection. A year later, this had grown to 350. This was not as unmanageable as it sounds – the list was broken down into the areas of interest, enabling us to identify which papers should be concentrated on to ensure that each issue had a good balance. This is almost certainly not the way a conventional academic journal is planned and produced – but we had no wish to produce a random collection of academic papers.

2 One of the unusual early opening spreads, 1996. This was for a paper on cantilevered stone staircases by Sam Price (Price & Myers, London).

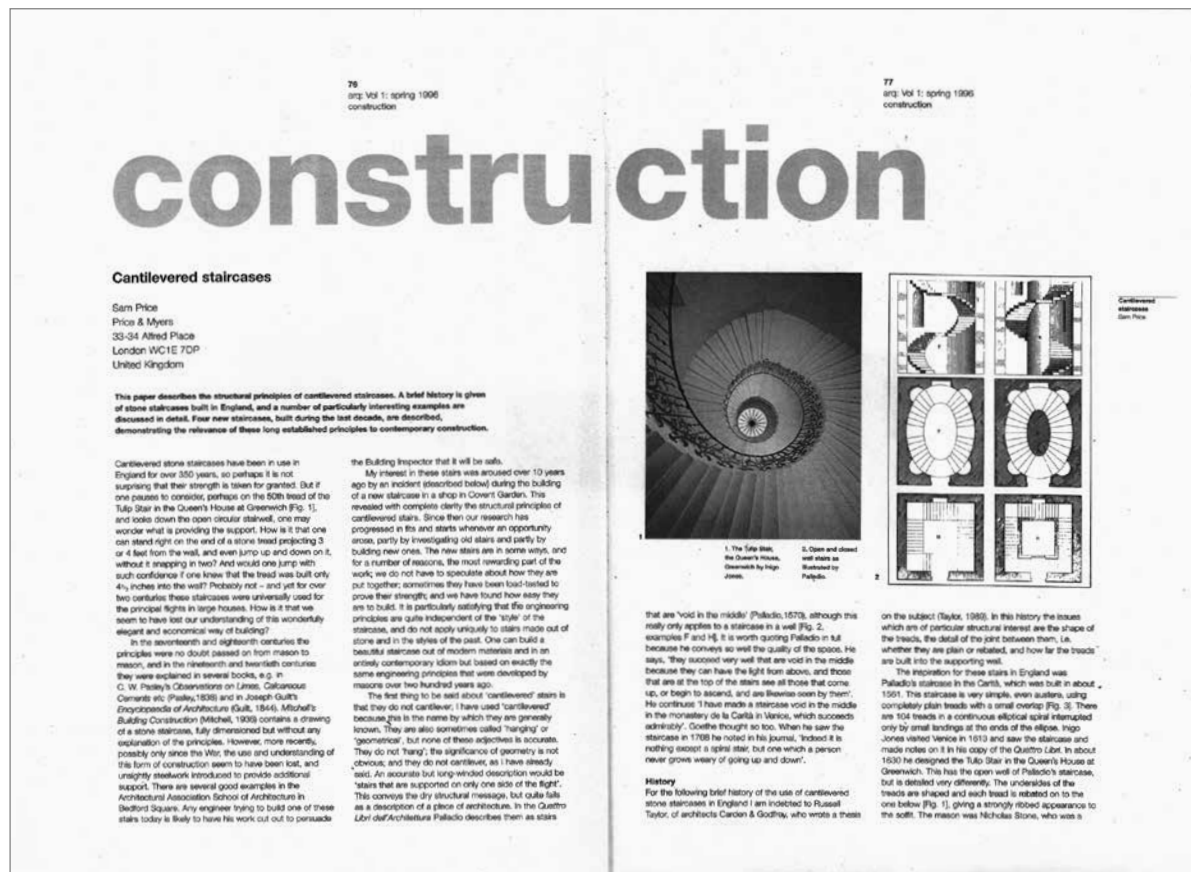
Our aim was to publish something of consistently wide interest and predictable form.

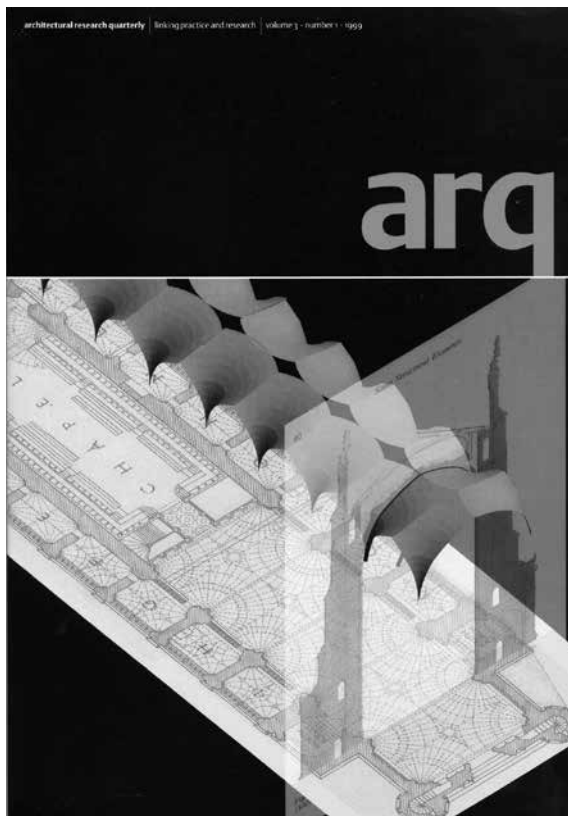
Size is another aspect of form. There was no debate on this – architecture is a visual art and demands to be laid out generously. A4 seemed the obvious choice, large enough to enable photographs, plans, diagrams, graphs, and tables to be reproduced at a reasonable size and to enable text in both two and three columns as well as titles and introductions running across the page. A4 also enabled a distinctive cover design with, in the vast majority of cases, an illustration of a building. Learned journals tend to be produced on tight budgets – specially designed covers and pages are not an option. The initial design has to be robust in order to last well.

Frequency was another key aspect. We felt that, in order to maintain a presence in readers’ minds, anything less than a quarterly would not suffice – and, given the demands of the academic world, it was, clearly, out of the question to publish more frequently. Paul Finch had suggested that the new journal should be called *Architectural Research*. Adding the ‘q’ for Quarterly and then abbreviating it to ARQ seemed an elegantly explicit solution. But being familiar with the excellent Chilean journal, ARQ (short for *arquitectura*), we opted for the title in lower case – **arq**. Keeping up to the ‘q’ occasionally tended to be difficult.

**Death and resurrection**

The initial take-up of subscriptions was encouraging. But, as the second year of publication progressed, the circulation started dropping. It





3 The first Cambridge University Press **arq** cover. King's College chapel illustrating a paper on reconstructing architectural geometry by Earl Mark (University of Virginia).

took a while before the publishers realised that renewal notices had not been sent out – their subscription renewal software catered for weeklies and monthlies but not quarterlies! Ironically, too, the few specialist architecture bookshops couldn't get copies for sale. Equally dismaying was the almost total failure to promote the new publication in either the *AJ* or the *AR* – a curious waste of an incredibly useful resource available to no other such journal. What promotion had been undertaken was aimed at academics while practitioners, potentially the largest readership, were ignored. In summer 1997, after eight issues, a newly appointed Managing Director at EMAP withdrew support.

Within a month, a new publishing proposal, based on two years' experience and supported by the issues so far published, was submitted to CUP. It expressed interest, contacted EMAP and approached six referees, half of them US-based. With one exception – who claimed that **arq**'s design 'has all the charm of a technical manual' – their reports were gratifyingly supportive even if, as another referee stated, '**arq** is a diamond in the rough'. Changes were suggested. The North American presence on the editorial board was substantially increased and Thomas Fisher, head of the University of Minnesota School

of Architecture and former editor of *Progressive Architecture* was appointed as joint Editor.

The design was also changed – to the disappointment of some readers who had enjoyed the unusual opening spreads of the original [2], designed by the *AJ* art editor Derek Westwood. The cover design was maintained, but Dale Tomlinson, then of CUP, redesigned the grids, introduced new easier-to-read serif fonts and selected a slightly glossy, less smudgy paper. This same format was maintained by Angela Ashton, Dale's successor, who continues to design **arq** to this day. After a break of some months, the first CUP-published issue appeared in spring 1999 [3].

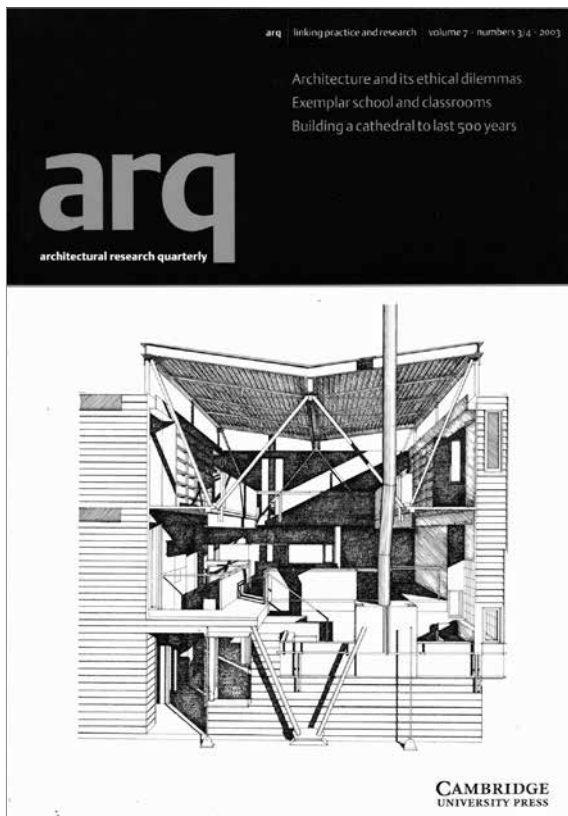
Towards the end of 2000, the UK-based Charles Rattray joined as Associate Editor responsible for the book reviews and insight section at the back of the journal. Despite annual meetings, the North American collaboration lasted no more than three years. The inescapable fact was that the vast bulk of the work of attracting, processing, and publishing papers was being done in the UK. By contrast, the contributions of our Dutch and Swedish board members were significant. Indeed, early in 2000, *Nordisk Arkitekturforskning* – the *Nordic Journal of Architectural Research* carried a report on **arq** and its approach to publishing architectural research. Two years later, Cambridge University Press and **arq** were awarded the 2002 Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers' Charlesworth Award for Learned Journals – the first time CUP had received this.

### Looking back

Placing the study of design proposals and buildings at the forefront had been a risk. Could architectural and building design be considered as research? Our editorial board – typifying the kind of subscribers and readers we planned to attract – fully supported our approach and the first few issues carried a lively debate on design as research. Our position was, of course, very different from that taken some years before by Lionel March, the founding editor of *Environment and Planning B*. March, the first director of Cambridge's Centre for Land Use and Built Form Studies (later the Martin Centre), saw practitioners as solvers of specific sets of problems. For him, research involved general solutions to comprehensive classes of problems. The debate continues (as REF guidelines have become more specific) and there remains a need for a place where designs can be analysed and reflected upon.

Incorporating many specialist areas had been another risk. Would one really be able to attract good papers from those areas? However, there turned out to be, albeit with some lapses, enough good specialist material relating to architecture and building to sustain the hoped-for diversity. Another measure of diversity is the source and context of published material. A UK bias was inevitable on much of the non-refereed items but the refereed papers were, broadly, international in origin.

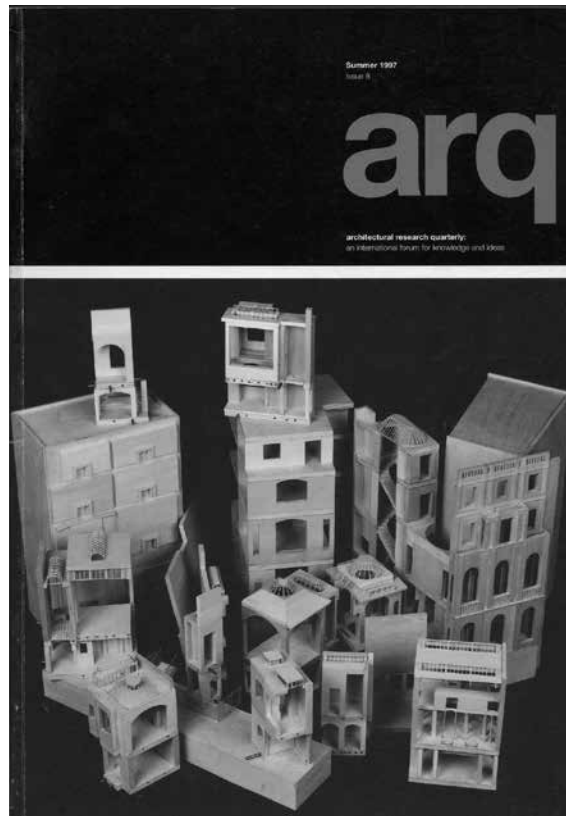
What underpinned those early years was a determination to publish stimulating and good-



4 The cover of the last of the twenty-eight issues of *arq* edited by the author, 2003. The house on Farish Street, Charlottesville by Edward Ford

(University of Virginia), the author of *The Details of Modern Architecture 1 and 2* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990 and 1996).

5 The last EMAP *arq* cover, 1997. Sir John Soane's House and Museum model by Peter Mullan and Thomas Gluck (Yale University).



looking issues that would appeal to both academics and practitioners. That's what all successful, well-read architectural journals try to do. The difference was that the bulk of our material was refereed and that our content ranged more widely. Above all, we wished to avoid becoming merely a facility for the publication of academic research papers – sometimes sourced almost entirely from a single conference.

Those first twenty-eight issues now lie, in seven bound volumes, next to where I'm writing this piece. Dipping into them again has recalled the agonies and pleasures of their production. On the agony side I must repeat my apologies to Michel Moussette for the mysterious mangling of his text on OMA's Kunsthall. This was in my last issue [4] and a sure sign that it was time to hand over. Of the pleasures, there were many. Florian Beigel and Philip Christou's contributions<sup>1</sup> and, later, Hans van der Heijden's<sup>2</sup> had a clarity and broader relevance that was unusual in the 'design' pieces. Sam Price's research on cantilevered stone staircases<sup>3</sup> and Jacques Heyman's studies of Palladio's wooden bridges<sup>4</sup> and the Henry VII chapel vaulting<sup>5</sup> were models of their kind as were Wayne Forster's analysis of the cladding of David Chipperfield's Rowing Museum<sup>6</sup> and Brian Ford's study of passive draught evaporative cooling.<sup>7</sup> In the non-refereed sections, the endless RAE debate

provoked some excellent contributions, including Philip Steadman and Bill Hillier's meticulous exposé of the 2001 RAE.<sup>8</sup> Of the many student contributions, the most unusual was Yale's Peter Mullan and Thomas Gluck's wonderful model of Sir John Soane's House and Museum<sup>9</sup> – so beautiful that it made the last EMAP cover [5].

### The same again

Creating and editing *arq* (latterly, in collaboration with Charles Rattray) was an extraordinary experience. Working, in unknown territory, with the Editorial Boards – a stimulating mix of architects, engineers and others, academics, and practitioners – was hugely enjoyable. So, too, was the quarterly laying-out process with the art editor. And, as with any refereed journal, there were the referees – carrying out, uncredited, a difficult task on top of their regular responsibilities. It would be invidious to name names but, among all these participants, there was one who is no longer with us: Peter Blundell Jones. Right from the outset, *arq* owed much to Peter's enthusiasm, generosity, and scholarship.

In the years since 1994 much has changed. Writing from a distance of nearly two decades from active involvement in academia, I would suggest that the impact of research assessment on architecture education, research, and practice has not always been for the better – the disjunctions between studio teachers and lecturers, and between academia and practice in some institutions seem stronger than ever. So much so that, if I was initiating *arq* now, I'd write almost exactly the same first 'leader' as I did in 1995.

**Notes**

1. Florian Beigel and Philip Christou, 'A Tapestry in the Landscape', **arq: Architectural Research Quarterly** 1, No. 1 (1995), 28–44; 'Brikettfabrik Witznitz: Specific Indeterminacy – Designing for Uncertainty', **arq: Architectural Research Quarterly** 2 (winter, 1996), 18–38; and 'Time Architecture: Stadtlandschaft Lichterfelde Süd, Berlin', **arq: Architectural Research Quarterly** 3, No. 4 (1999), 202–19.
2. Hans van der Heijden, 'The Diagram of the House', **arq: Architectural Research Quarterly** 5, No. 2 (2001), 110–25; and 'The Intermediary Urban Scale', **arq: Architectural Research Quarterly** 7, No. 1 (2003), 12–31.
3. Sam Price, 'Cantilevered Staircases', **arq: Architectural Research Quarterly** 1, No. 3 (1996), 76–87.
4. Jacques Heyman, 'Palladio's Wooden Bridges', **arq: Architectural Research Quarterly** 4, No. 1 (2000), 81–5.
5. Jacques Heyman, 'An Observation on the Fan Vault of Henry VII Chapel, Westminster', **arq: Architectural Research Quarterly** 4, No. 4 (2000), 357–72.
6. Wayne Forster, 'Tradition and Innovation: Timber as Rainscreen Cladding', **arq: Architectural Research Quarterly** 2, No. 4 (1997), 54–63.
7. Brian Ford, 'Passive Draught Evaporative Cooling', **arq: Architectural Research Quarterly** 5, No. 3 (2001), 271–80.
8. Philip Steadman and Bill Hillier, 'Research Assessment Under the Microscope: Disturbing Findings and Distorting Effects', **arq: Architectural Research Quarterly** 6, No. 3 (2002), 203–7.
9. Peter Mullan and Thomas Gluck, 'Sir John Soane's House and Museum Model', **arq: Architectural Research Quarterly** 2, No. 4 (1997), 54–63.

**Acknowledgments**

My thanks to Charles Rattray – an unfailing source of inspiration and constructive criticism – for our years of enjoyable collaboration and for his comments on this article.

**Author's biography**

Peter Carolin worked for John Voelcker from 1960–3 and with Colin St John Wilson & Partners (as a Partner from 1973, on the British Library and other buildings), 1965–80. He was Technical and Practice Editor and then Editor of *The Architects' Journal*, 1981–9. He then served as Professor of Architecture and head of the University of Cambridge Department of Architecture, 1989–2000. He was the Founding Editor of **arq** from 1995–2003.

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