Zerb Managing Editor Annual Report 2022

Zerb and Publications sub-committee
Over the past 18 months or so, we have been holding regular Publications meetings on Zoom, where we discuss a breadth of matters, including content for each forthcoming magazine, exploring ways to strengthen GTC In Focus' and Zerb's individual identities whilst fostering continuity between the two publications and website. We have greatly appreciated the support, encouragement and sense of real team spirit this has brought.

Amongst other things, I/we have been exploring new ideas to potentially develop, and one that has successfully been introduced is the 'GTC Quick Q&A with…' strand, which is shared across both Zerb and GTC IF. Whilst a simple idea, it has already proven to be popular, and I believe it to be an excellent step forward in creating an identity-building formula. Any input and ideas are always welcome for concepts, direction and content, so please do get in touch if you have any.

Zerb deadlines
Unfortunately, Z94 suffered the greatest delay to its schedule of any of my issues so far, for which I apologise unreservedly. There were multiple factors that contributed to this, some were completely out of my control, some were unavoidable, and I take full responsibility for the rest. Fortunately, whilst the re-scheduling of BSC Expo 2022 did help, I was delighted to actually achieve Z95's revised deadline on time, especially as it was no mean feat to effectively get it done in a very busy two months! However, a very challenging scenario in my family that had been ongoing throughout Z94, sadly came to a head during Z95, and I'd like express my sincere gratitude to Simon, Ali, Peter R and Clive for the selfless support and assistance that enabled the issue to remain on schedule – thank you!

It is worth noting, now that the world of work has started to return to a normality after the main lockdowns and restrictions, that the potential of busy work periods will have an impact on Zerb workflow, for me personally, as well as for contributors too. Obviously, I will do all I can to keep things on track, but I can see that there will be flash points that I will have to navigate the best I can.

The return of exhibitions
As I write this, Kate and I have just had a couple of productive days at MPTS '22, after last month's BSC Expo '22. Both exhibitions provided some invaluable engagement with a range of individuals and organisations, it was particularly rewarding to also receive a wealth of positive feedback, from members and non-members alike, about both the GTC and Zerb. It's not an understatement, let alone false modesty, to say I was unprepared for the level of praise received for the quality of Zerb at both shows – I am proud to share such unreserved compliments with all the amazing contributors, colleagues in the GTC who assist, our amazing designers at Toast and printers at Holywell Press.

Given the interest that was shown by a number of visitors to our stand at both shows, I believe we may well gain some new members. In fact, one individual came to our MPTS stand to collect more issues of Zerb, as he'd joined up after reading the issues he'd taken away from BSC – and he is keen to contribute to a future issue. I'm looking to follow up potential content with other folk with whom I spoke at both shows. I shall also forward on contact details to Council of a number of people and organisations that are keen to engage with the GTC in various ways. Obviously, exhibitions are Kate's area, but I'd say that both shows were well worth the GTC's attendance, as well as potentially for me with Zerb – and has reaffirmed the role that Zerb plays in engaging with members and companies within our industry; being on the stand is definitely much more than just propping up the table and chatting amongst ourselves.

Zerb and advertising
Simon and I do work closely together throughout the year, particularly with regards to Advertising and Sponsorship, and I'm grateful for the excellent, hard work that he puts into getting advertisers on board, and it's clearly been the hardest couple of years to sell.

We're finding the balance now, whereby although it's good to sometimes have content that ties in or is sourced by (preferably sponsor) companies, it is always key to keep editorial and advertising interests at arm's length – it's not that any integrity is ever challenged, but perhaps I have been too eager to try to help get advertising through the content, as it can be quite distracting of my time and attention, and sales tend to be fairly organic anyway. What still remains a challenge for me at times is if, despite explicitly asking for it not to be, any copy I receive is thinly veiled press release or promotional material with no real editorial merit.

I reject this whenever it is unsalvageable, but do my best to find or introduce angles or elements that help reframe it to be Zerb-worthy, wherever I can.

Having now had an increasing number of articles in recent issues that are company orientated, I have engaged with those companies as to whether they'd like to have copies of the specific issue/s of Zerb in their offices, and at their stands at exhibitions, and this has proven to be well-received by some, and I feel helps build stronger relationships for the GTC. Great examples of these have been: sponsor CVP (who had a prominent presence at BSC Expo), happily took numerous copies of Z94, due to the excellent article that I wrote about the role of the lens technician I wrote having visited CVP; likewise sponsor 3LR took a number of Z95, due to the highly technical and informative article on LED arrays that was written by someone from ETC; other sponsors to take some copies have included Tiffen (Steadicam articles), Cirrolite (Fiilex article), Vitec (Flowtech and Anton-Bauer articles) and Reflectric.

Stock levels of back issues of publications held by the printers
We have arrived at that time again, where I need to slim down the stock of back issues of GTC publications. Holywell kindly hold all our stock, and is understandably needing to regain some of its space again. The lack of exhibitions and GTC events over the past couple of years has meant fewer opportunities to use up stock, although I have attempted to preempt this with reduced print runs. My approach of stacking up hight for the two shows have certainly helped with this situation, but I will assess whether we need some other methods, such as approaching teaching establishments may be necessary to avoid any wastage – any ideas are welcome.

Zerb Spring 2022 Issue 95
This was the first issue marking the GTC's 50th anniversary, whereby some content reflected back on the past. I have received some very positive comments specifically regarding this issue, which I have greatly appreciated.

Zerb Autumn 2022 Issue 96
I have yet to get underway properly with this issue, largely as I have hit a busy time with both work and preparing and attending the exhibitions shows, which have taken up considerable time. I have some potential articles that I need to follow up ASAP, and I'm hopeful that the shows may have provided possible new content too. Z96 will also acknowledge our anniversary year, but with a more forward looking slant, covering more now and in the future, so any thoughts on that would also be greatly appreciated.

Rob Emmanuel, Managing Editor of Zerb, May 2022