It gives me great pleasure to write the editorial of the first issue of *Interpreting and Society: An Interdisciplinary Journal* and to introduce this much-needed initiative in my capacity as Consultant Editor. Had we been launching such an important publication under normal circumstances, it would have been an added pleasure to be physically present to share a celebratory drink with long-time colleagues and friends, and to meet some of the many young scholars whose cutting-edge research on interpreting as a social phenomenon will no doubt revolutionise the discipline in the coming years. Above all, *Interpreting and Society* is envisaged as a platform for showcasing such innovative and socially relevant research, especially given the dearth of journals that specialise in interpreting and growing evidence of the fact that scholarly output in this field is fast outstripping the space that can be provided by existing journals.

In the absence of a safe physical space in which to celebrate this new initiative with friends and colleagues at the time of COVID-19, then, let me say a few words about the urgency and relevance of the journal through the less interactive medium of writing. *Interpreting and Society* sets out to situate interpreting within the social and political fabric of everyday life, as a phenomenon that takes diverse forms and pervades interaction in settings as varied as refugee camps, international and pan-national conferences, sports events, religious sermons, hospital wards, war crimes tribunals, and social movement gatherings, among many others. What is common to all these different modes and settings in which interpreting takes place, as I argued in the past, is that they locate the interpreter within a social and political dynamic that requires socially relevant research to engage with issues such as power, distance, face-threats, and socio-textual practices (Mason, 1999). In the two decades or so since I highlighted the need for such research, much has of course changed, and the number of studies that address these issues has multiplied. More importantly, some of these studies have also succeeded in revisiting traditional research topics—including issues of cognition, research methods, and the impact of technology on professional practice—from a critical perspective that demonstrates awareness of the nature of interpreting as

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an integrative social practice. A large percentage of this scholarship, however, has appeared outside specialist journals of interpreting. Many have been published in journals of translation studies, but many others have found a home in journals specialising in other disciplines and thus lack visibility in the field: journals such as Ethnicity and Health, Journal of War & Culture Studies, Transnational Social Review, Journal of Social Sciences, Armed Forces & Society, Postcolonial Studies, Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies, and Qualitative Research, among many others. Interpreting and Society aims to provide an interdisciplinary space for such socially relevant and critical research to be more directly accessible to the community, supported by an open-access policy that requires no financial investment on the part of authors or their institutions, thanks to generous funding provided by Beijing Foreign Studies University, whose strength in translator/interpreter education and T&I (translation and interpreting) research is renowned throughout the world.

Like many other colleagues at different stages of their career development, I will be watching this space with considerable interest, and am honoured to be part of this exciting new initiative.

Ian Mason
Scotland, May 2021

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Biography
Ian Mason is consultant editor of Interpreting and Society: An Interdisciplinary Journal. His work spans a number of areas in translation and interpreting studies, but he is widely acknowledged as pioneering the study of Dialogue Interpreting. Over a long career at Heriot Watt University (Edinburgh, Scotland), he taught translation, interpreting, and French language studies, playing a key role in the PhD programme in translation, communication, and discourse. Among a number of international invitations, he is visiting professor at the Sichuan University, Chengdu, China (2006 onwards) and, from 2009 to 2011, provided doctoral training in applied linguistics and translation studies at the Hellenic American University of Athens.