

Emmott signs off as editor of the Economist

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The editor of the Economist stepped down yesterday after a 13-year tenure during which he doubled the global circulation of the weekly news magazine to more than 1m. Bill Emmott, who had been at the title for 26 years since joining as a junior Brussels correspondent, said that he was leaving to concentrate on writing books.

Thanks to a combination of clever marketing and an increased global appetite for its opinionated, high powered analysis of world events, he has succeeded in boosting global circulation to over 1m, according to the latest ABC figures.

More than half of those sales are now in the US, with the UK accounting for 158,142 copies a week. Mr Emmott told staff that he planned to concentrate initially on a book about the growing rivalry between China and Japan and could not imagine editing any other publication.

"The Economist is the best there is, and being editor of it has, for me, been the best possible job," he added.

Mr Emmott is the third high-ranking Economist executive to leave in the past year, following the departures of deputy editor Clive Crook and publisher David Hanger in 2005. The 163-year-old title has thrived in recent years despite the threat of the internet and a global downturn in newspaper sales.

Sir Robert Wilson, chairman of the Economist Group that is 50/50 owned by Pearson and private shareholders, said: "He achieved this while setting ever-higher standards of analysis and commentary for the paper. He will surely be remembered as one of the great editors of the Economist."

The board hopes to appoint a new editor by the end of March. Contenders for the role include Emma Duncan, the former UK editor, who has been deputy editor since May, and US editor John Micklethwait.

Mr Emmott's decision means he will, for the first time, be allowed to add his name to a leader article. The magazine has a strict policy of not adding bylines to articles, with one of the few exceptions being when an editor departs.

