THE EDITORS

On Re-launching a Journal

A new title, a new look, a new quarterly format—and, we hope, the best of the HSPS heritage: With this inaugural issue (Volume 38, Issue 1) the editorial team for Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences re-launches a journal with a history and profile unique in the discipline. Under the direction of Russell McCormmach and John Heilbron, Historical Studies in the Physical and Biological Sciences gained a reputation for closely analyzed, historically grounded accounts of scientific ideas, institutions, and practices. The new editors of HSNS welcome the challenge to continue its excellence. At the same time, we open the door to a wider reach in the natural sciences and a broader methodological spectrum.

In this issue we offer four research articles and two book reviews, marking out some of the directions in which we seek to move. The articles are invited contributions from sharp-sighted historians—several prolific HSPS authors among them—who have agreed to inaugurate HSNS traditions by example. Their essays draw on the substantive attention to content that has distinguished the journal’s best articles, while reflecting more broadly on political, societal, cultural, and historiographical issues. We are deeply indebted to John Krige, Evelyn Fox Keller, Robert E. Kohler, and Naomi Oreskes, Erik M. Conway, and Matthew Shindell for their contributions. We are equally pleased to present them to our readers. We do not intend that these commissions should circumscribe the journal’s mandate. Rather, we have aimed to illustrate the diversity of topics and approaches, and their shared anchoring in argument and evidence, for which we hope to make a home in HSNS.

Broadening the journal’s historic focus on the physical sciences and experimental biology, we want to bring our readers the full range of topics in the modern natural sciences. As well as studies based in scientific disciplines or institutional history, we welcome those centered on sociopolitical developments.
or cross-cutting intellectual concerns. Our temporal compass is the eighteenth
century to the present. Although our inaugural articles are situated in Europe
and North America, we explicitly encourage articles based outside this geo-
graphy. We will also feature special issues organized by guest editors; we invite
proposals to the editorial board.

This issue also presents our transformed book review section, here inaugu-
rated with essays by Matthew Stanley and Charles C. Gillispie. Overseen by
editors Angela N.H. Creager and Michael D. Gordin, the book review section
will be guided by a new principle of selection. Other journals in our field al-
ready fill the need for maximal coverage, reviewing as many worthy books as
they are able. Instead we have decided to offer depth, nuance, and compari-
son. We will give our reviewers and readers the space to reflect on specific works
of scholarship and recent trends in their fields, in, for example, historiograph-
ical review essays, exploring the state of a subfield and the variety of approaches
deployed in it, and in-depth reviews of single, particularly interesting books.
Further, we are intent on including more studies published in languages other
than English, giving detailed discussions of methodology and approach to serve
a reading community that still communicates mainly in English.

For this inaugural issue, the research articles and book reviews convey much
of our intent for the journal. These are visible changes, going hand-in-hand
with the new HSNS layout and quarterly publication. At the same time, a final
transformation has been underway behind the scenes, one that equally reflects
our ambition for the journal. HSNS is headed by a five-person editorial board
who take collective responsibility for all articles. The editorial board is backed
by about a dozen associate editors, who play an active role unusual in the field.
Our associate editors secure peer reviews and, in dialogue with the editorial
board, formulate recommendations for acceptance, revision, or rejection. They
stand behind their reports with their names, as we encourage HSNS reviewers
to do as well. To prospective authors we hope to offer a collective reviewing
process that is prompt, fair, and transparent; we also intend to carry forward
another HSPS legacy by working with them to ensure that their articles are
well-written.

Old standards, new mechanisms: a mix of continuity and change. The jour-
nal will continue to be published by the Journals + Digital Publishing Division
of the University of California Press. We are profoundly grateful to the Press
for supporting the re-launch in every way. Aside from the new book review office
in Princeton, the rest of the journal’s business will continue to be coordinated
in Berkeley. The calm, able presence of Managing Editor Diana Wear in the Office for History of Science and Technology has made it possible to conceive this transition and carry it out.

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