

# Change and Continuity at the *Canadian Journal of Sociology/Cahiers canadiens de sociologie*

When Professor Nico Stehr asked me to succeed him as editor of the *Canadian Journal of Sociology/Cahiers canadiens de sociologie* (CJS/CCS) I was both honoured and apprehensive. Established in 1975 by a group of five sociologists at the University of Alberta, the CJS/CCS is Canada's oldest exclusively sociological journal. Under Professor Stehr's excellent stewardship it emerged as a premiere publication venue for a wide range of sociological scholarship that is read globally and cited widely. My shelf contains a two-metre-long run of CJS/CCS volumes which serve to reinforce the major contribution that this publication has made to sociology in Canada and internationally. Professor Stehr also had the foresight in 1995 to establish the *Canadian Journal of Sociology OnLine*, a rarity in those early days of electronic publishing. Hence, I am intimately aware of the journal's high standards and history of innovation. At the same time, I also know that scholarly publishing in Canada is a precarious venture.

This editorial presents my plans for the journal for the coming years and how I expect to meet these challenges. Before outlining the changes — some of which are quite significant — it is worth accentuating the attributes of the journal that I will jealously protect. Most fundamentally, all of the coming changes are motivated by a desire to ensure that the journal's reputation for excellent scholarship is maintained and advanced. There continues to be a demonstrated need for a quality generalist Canadian sociology journal; one that publishes rigorously peer-reviewed works from the entire spectrum of sociological thought and also from the interdisciplinary matrix that increasingly informs our scholarship. In terms of the journal's Canadian orientation, we will continue to strike a balance between encouraging works with an international focus while also publishing distinctively Canadian works. All publications will continue to appear in either of Canada's two official languages.

With these continuities in mind, there is also an ambitious agenda for reform. Change is required for the good of the journal and the wider sociological community. Some of the transformations are internal housekeeping matters, but others are larger in scope. All are being undertaken in the best interests of the intellectual and public communities served by the *Canadian Journal of Sociology/Cahiers canadiens de sociologie*. The modifications listed below are

presented in no particular order, although the most fundamental is mentioned last, as it deserves a more sustained explanation.

1. *Attract a new generation of readers and contributors to the CJS/CCS.* While the journal has an active readership, many of our subscribers are now of an older generation. Several changes are designed to bring a new cohort of sociologists and interdisciplinary scholars to the CJS/CCS. Renewal and reinvigoration is imperative for the long-term health of the journal.
2. *Establish a formal governance structure.* I have established a governance structure which includes a University of Alberta Executive Board which will offer input on the journal's operations.
3. *Change the journal's academic style.* Over the years the CJS/CCS developed its own in-house referencing style which, although familiar to some authors, is idiosyncratic and can make it difficult to format papers. Starting with the first volume in 2008 the journal will move to the *Chicago Manual of Style*. This will provide contributors with a familiar style and will also allow those individuals who use personal bibliographic software to effortlessly format or reformat their references for submissions to the journal.
4. *Publish more book reviews in a more timely fashion.* Professor Jim Conley of Trent University has generously agreed to be our new book review editor. In his work with the *Canadian Journal of Sociology OnLine* he has established a reputation for quickly processing book reviews to the benefit of reviewers and authors alike.
5. *Establish new associate editors.* We are blessed with an excellent and dedicated group of associate editors who have effectively served as the journal's backbone. In an effort to maximize the number of individuals involved with the journal and provide new individuals with a more active role I will be adding some new individuals to the editorial board. In seeking out new associate editors I am eager to recruit individuals with an international reputation, who will commit to this position for a five-year term, and who represent the various forms of diversity that now characterize our discipline.
6. *Increase the national and international profile of the journal.* This is undoubtedly the aim of all editors, and I believe that all of these changes will help fulfil this ambition.
7. *Provide more "value added" for individual contributors.* One way to accomplish this is to encourage our anonymous reviewers to provide detailed constructive commentary on the manuscripts they review. Thankfully, I see this as more of a continuity issue, as I am very pleased with the quality and generosity demonstrated in the reviews we receive. As one

recent contributor noted: “[i]t is nice to see that the journal has reviewers who are willing to put forward the time and effort — the comments were detailed, thoughtful, and respectfully critical (which is a lot more than I can say about other journals).” I expect to maintain this standard.

8. *Increased copy editing.* A second way to provide added value for individuals who publish in the CJS/CCS is through detailed copy-editing. Towards that end I recently hired Laura Botsford as our new editorial assistant. Mrs. Botsford brings thirty years copy-editing experience to the journal. Both Jim Conley and I are also taking an active role in editing articles, review essays and book reviews.
9. *Computerize the submission process.* For many years authors have been able to submit manuscripts to the journal electronically. Those submissions, however, were then tracked in the journal office through a paper-and-pencil process. It was not a very transparent system, and one that lent itself to delays. Hence, we are in the process of adopting the Open Journal System (OJS). Authors and reviewers will submit their manuscripts or reviews online, allowing editors to more easily track the status of submissions. This will make it easier to meet our ideal turn-around time of three months between submission and decision. The new site for the CJS/CCS is currently under construction, and can be found at: <http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/CJS>. In the coming months the functionality and aesthetics of this site will be significantly transformed. While this change will enhance the efficiency of managing submissions, I also recognize that some find this form of submission process cumbersome and impersonal. Consequently, I plan to take all possible measures to counter those tendencies by ensuring that the system has ample opportunities for personalized contact and a proper level of technical support.
10. *Integrate the CJS OnLine into the CJS/CCS.* When the *CJS OnLine* was first established it was a leading-edge innovation in scholarly publishing. In the ensuing years electronic journals have become increasingly familiar and we have reached the point where the functions of the *CJS OnLine* can be better served by integrating them with the *Canadian Journal of Sociology/Cahiers canadiens de sociologie*. Individuals who have published in the *CJS Online* can be assured that we will archive their contributions and that they will continue to be available on the internet.
11. *Transition the CJS/CCS to an “Open Access” format.* This is the most fundamental change, and it can be captured in two propositions: 1. Starting in January 2008, the journal will no longer publish a hard copy edition, and 2. The journal will be freely available to *anyone* with an internet connection.

Starting in 2008 you need not renew your subscription as there will no longer be a hard copy version of the journal. Articles published in the *CJS/CCS*

prior to 2008 will be available through regular library services and new articles will also be indexed by all of the major indexing services. The difference is that new articles will now also be available free of charge online.

Open access electronic journals are no longer idiosyncratic ventures existing at the margins of scholarly publishing and at the bottom of the hierarchy of journals. When the *New England Journal of Medicine* began to offer open access to all its contents, six months after articles had been initially published, it ended any notion that journals providing open access were of a lesser quality or prestige. Undoubtedly, academics with a sentimental attachment to the idea of a hard copy journal might see this as an unwelcome development, but many of those same individuals readily admit that they increasingly access scholarly works electronically.

There are multiple reasons for this change. For authors, it means that your articles will have a greater impact. Research published in open access journals reaches a wider global community of scholars, policymakers, and activists. More instrumentally, it also immediately increases an author's citation count — often substantially so — because more people can access, read, and cite your work (see “The Effect of Open Access and Downloads (‘Hits’) on Citation Impact: A Bibliography of Studies” <http://opcit.eprints.org/oacitation-biblio.html>).

There is also the principled position that open access ensures that a larger segment of the public can easily access research — research which the public has often helped to fund through taxes. As such, it advances current efforts to nurture a form of “public sociology” in Canada. Major institutions are increasingly expecting that researchers will publish in open access journals. Canadian Institutes of Health Research, for example, is about to release its policy requiring grant-holders to make a copy of any published work freely available within six months of publication and it seems likely that SSHRC will soon follow this open access mandate policy. *The Canadian Journal of Sociology/Cahiers canadiens de sociologie* is excited to be among the path-breaking journals providing authors with the opportunity to publish their works in an established quality high-profile venue that is also open access. Indeed, we expect that it is only a matter of time before all of the major journals follow our lead.

Another advantage of the electronic format is that it loosens the degree to which editorial decisions are structured by financial considerations. Electronic journals can publish more contributions because editors do not have to worry about the increased publishing and shipping costs of larger volumes. While I do not anticipate any change in the number of peer-reviewed articles published in the *CJS/CCS*, there will be more opportunities to include debate and discussion in the journal. For example, the *CJS/CCS* has an excellent history of publishing important and avidly read “Notes on Society” and “Notes on the Discipline.” The electronic format means that we can now include more

“notes” without worrying that doing so might dilute our core mission — publishing peer-reviewed articles — or increase costs.

Book reviews can also be published in a more timely fashion. To be blunt, academic journals often approach book reviews as a form of “filler” used to flesh out the back of the volume. Publishing “too many” book reviews increases the size and costs of the volume. The net result is that book reviews can languish in the journal office’s files until space opens up in any particular volume. Individuals who write reviews are not well served by this situation, nor are the authors of the books themselves. These changes will therefore better allow us to meet the scholarly need for timely quality commentary on important new sociological texts.

Other benefits of this move include the environmental implications of eliminating the hard copy and the attendant need to ship those volumes internationally. The fact that articles will be fully digitized allows for greater electronic functionality, such as an embedded dictionary, thesaurus and electronic searching capability. OJS’s “Reading Tools” allow readers to consult related studies, government policies, media stories and other means to increase the richness of the context in which articles are being read. There is also a process for “reference linking,” which allows readers to automatically connect to references and to incorporate them in their personal bibliographic software. Interested readers can choose to be notified by e-mail when a new volume is published. As electronic publishing continues to develop we can only expect to see more of such value-added dimensions.

The financial implications of this move remain somewhat opaque, and I have agonized over this issue. The situation of independent scholarly publishing in Canadian has always been precarious. This is particularly true with the *CJS/CCS* which does not receive any association funds. Retiring the hard copy version of the journal eliminates subscription revenue, which is one of our major sources of funding. That said, mimicking wider publishing trends, the journal’s subscriptions have been substantially declining at the same time that our electronic readership (through Project MUSE and other venues) has increased dramatically. Moreover, it was always the case that most of our subscription revenues went to cover the costs associated with producing a hard copy volume, such as printing, subscription management and postage.

Ultimately, this move means that we are now more centrally dependent on SSHRC funding, but in practice that has been the case for some time. There is, however, reason for optimism about the funding situation. SSHRC has emerged as a major proponent of open access publishing and is now supporting open access journals. Given the prominence and reputation of the *CJS/CCS* I expect that we will continue to receive such funds.

While this might seem like a dramatic transformation, it actually changes very little in terms of the journal’s routines or orientation. We remain com-

mitted to excellent peer-reviewed scholarship and will continue to draw upon a high profile group of generous reviewers to evaluate and offer constructive commentary on submissions.

My hope is that you will embrace these changes which I believe put us at the forefront of academic publishing and will only increase the reach and impact of your scholarship.

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Cahiers canadiens de sociologie*

Kevin D. Haggerty, Editor