



# *Journal of Religion & Society*

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**The Kripke Center**

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## From the Editor's Desk

### Looking Forward to the Next Twenty Years

Zachary B. Smith, General Editor

In the mid-1990s, Ronald A. Simkins took over as director of the then-named Center for the Study of Religion & Society at Creighton University and started several hallmark projects that would define the Center's contributions to academic scholarship. One of those was the *Journal of Religion & Society*, which for the past 22 years has published peer-reviewed, open-access articles on religious studies and related areas. Ron saw the possibilities provided by the nascent Internet for free, global access to cutting-edge scholarship, and the *JRS* was one of the pioneers in the open-access movement for journals in the field of religious studies.

Two decades later there is increased need for the interdisciplinary study of religion and society, and for scholarly literature that is freely available to scholars and the wider public. As universities shrink their budgets and libraries lighten their holdings while more people worldwide seek reliable sources of knowledge, there need to be creative solutions to the problems of supporting knowledge creation, dissemination, and preservation. Hundreds of open-access journals, and the knowledge they brought, have disappeared or will likely disappear in the near future, with no way to retrieve back issues (Brainard 2020; Laakso, Matthias, and Jahn 2021). Bad actors increasingly prey on the unwary producers and consumers of scholarly literature, often publishing garbage glossed as scholarship (Allf 2020). Increasing polarization along religious and political lines (see, most recently, *JRS Supplement 23*), a segment of the public's declining faith in academics and their scholarship, and the decline of "truth" and "facts" as normative concepts means that what we write needs to be available to all, not hidden behind paywalls and relegated to the dust heaps in the ivory towers (see McIntyre 2018).

These issues have been in the forefront of my mind as I take over the helm of the *Journal of Religion & Society* as the General Editor after three years as Associate Editor under Ron. While there are some very minor visual and behind-the-scenes changes to the journal, the core mission remains the same – we will publish quality, peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary scholarship on the intersection of religion and society, focusing on American religions and Western religious traditions, that moves forward the academic and social discourses. Our approach to authors will continue to be humane and supportive while upholding strict intellectual and evidentiary standards of academic publication. And we will ensure that our articles and the intellectual advances that they represent will not be “consigned to oblivion,” but that we will make every effort to preserve and provide openly this scholarship.

It is a great honor to take on the full editorial duties of the *Journal of Religion & Society*. I am thankful for Ron's continued support in his role as Director of the Kripke Center (which publishes the journal) and as the journal's new Managing Editor, the hard work of the Center's Faculty Associates who comprise the editorial board, and the help colleagues across the globe who serve as tireless, pinch-hit peer reviewers. Most of all, I am grateful for the authors whose scholarship serves as the backbone, heart, and soul of the *JRS*.

As we open the journal's twenty-third volume, I look forward to the conversations from the research we publish in the *Journal of Religion & Society*. Thank you, readers and authors, for being an integral part of those conversations in the journal's next decades. Ron has done an amazing job nurturing this journal, and we all will continue his work and carry the *JRS* forward into the next 20 years.

### **Bibliography**

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