



## Editor's Introduction

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The coronavirus pandemic has prevented the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, where we usually have gathered to launch each new summer issue. But thanks to our many volunteer reviewers, contributors, and editorial production team, we've managed to overcome the challenges of dealing with the COVID-19 crisis to pull together an exciting issue that should compete well with the myriad other on-screen offerings available during this global quarantine. I want to offer my thanks to all of you who have helped support and build *JWSR* over my 9-year tenure as editor-in-chief, now that I'm able to turn over the leadership to a new team whom I'll introduce below.

I'm especially pleased to present in this issue a project initiated by Leslie Sklair that has been developing over the past few years. Leslie insisted that it was high time to devote some close attention to the connections between world-systems and the Anthropocene, and he wanted this to be a collaborative project. We searched for quite some time to find a suitable and available co-editor until Michael Murphy joined my department and enthusiastically embraced this opportunity. Our guest editor team has recruited a set of noteworthy contributions offering diverse perspectives on an important and hopefully growing area of research in world-systems. I hope this special issue will inspire a surge of innovative scholarship to help us not only understand the systemic sources of the environmental conundrum we're in but also to envision and develop alternative operating systems for human societies that align with the Earth system's principles, logics, and constraints.



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In this issue we also consider the need for repairing the social relations distorted and transformed by the racial hierarchies that are integral to the capitalist world-system. Our symposium on reparations for slavery began with conversations among our editorial team, which noted the U.S.-centrism of the 2019 commemorations of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first auction of enslaved Africans in North America. We saw a need to help draw attention to the world-historical nature of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and its lasting effects across time and place. The result is a collection of short essays to prompt further critical conversations and inspire action as well as future research on this topic. We had no idea when we began the project how timely this discussion would become in recent months. Social movements demanding racial equity and justice have come out in force around the world to make reparations and healing a priority for politics today. These movements have elicited new action in the UN Human Rights Council and in the Caribbean Community for high-level global initiatives to address racial disparities and reparations, as we note in the introduction to our symposium. We believe that scholars bringing the world-historical lens and its attendant capacity for re-imagining social relations based in equity and justice can and should become more involved in supporting these critical, counterhegemonic developments. The essays by scholar practitioners leading this work aim to identify ways world history can help advance movements for reparations, and we hope they inspire action by our readers.

Finally, our book review section has been reduced by the pandemic's unexpected demands on our reviewers' energies, but we are pleased to feature two reviews. Corey Payne reviews Richard Lachmann's *First-Class Passengers on a Sinking Ship: Elite Politics and the Decline of Great Powers*, which he sees as showing how "the destructive pursuit of profit and narrow self-interest by elites has repeatedly caused the decline of great powers throughout historical capitalism." Perhaps we find some lessons here for leaders today? And in an effort to expand our journal's global reach and engagement with works beyond those in the English language, our book review editors include a review by Matthew Hayes of Edmond Dziembowski's *La guerre de Sept Ans*, available in French. This historical account provides rich detail of the debates and diplomacy of this major 18<sup>th</sup> century conflict.

### **The Future of the Journal of World-Systems Research**

This issue of *JWSR* marks my last one as editor-in-chief. I am pleased to announce that the Political Economy of the World-System (PEWS) Section publications committee headed by *JWSR*'s founding editor, Christopher Chase-Dunn, has recruited a stellar new editorial team to lead the journal. Andrej Grubačić, chair of the Anthropology and Social Change department at California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS), will be our new editor-in-chief, supported by managing editor, PhD candidate Rallie Murray (CIIS). Isaac Kamola (Trinity College) and Alexandre White (Johns Hopkins) are our new book review editors, and they began their term earlier this year during our transition, taking over this post from Jennifer Bair (University of Virginia). Julien Francois Gerber of International Institute of Social Sciences (The Hague) and Michelle Glowka (CIIS) will serve as Communications and Outreach co-editors. Finally, although recently retired, Patrick Manning will

continue as editor of our World-Historical Information section long enough to recruit his successor. Ruth Mostern, who succeeds Pat as director of the University of Pittsburgh's World History Center, is working to convene an interdisciplinary meeting of historians and others interested in data analysis and spatial modeling of the human past at the global scale. The meeting accompanies the launch of the [World Historical Gazetteer](#) and will also feature feature discussions about building the editorial leadership of the WHI section.

Our new book review editors have the daunting task of filling Jenn Bair's shoes. As Alexandre White and Isaac Kamola navigate the transition to the new editorial team, they hope to continue providing the impressive depth and breadth of books historically reviewed in JWSR. They also plan to experiment with a number of different review formats. One of these is collections of reviews of books on a shared topic, such as the review symposium on cities in the world-system published in [Winter/Spring 2018](#). The editors are currently soliciting reviews of books on policing, mass incarceration, and Black Lives Matter for the Winter/Spring 2021 issue. They also invite researchers to propose review essays on multiple books and author dialogues. Review essays are longer pieces (3-5,000 words) that engage multiple books on a shared theme. Author dialogues consists of two or more authors writing a series of short responses to each other's work, such as the dialogue between William Robinson and Michael Hanchard in [Summer/Fall 2019](#). In addition to new formats, the review editors will also be providing a running list of books they are interested in seeing reviewed and will be inviting inquiries from potential reviewers. Watch the JWSR website for details, and contact our editors if you'd like to propose ideas for this section. (Alexandre White: [awhite94@jhmi.edu](mailto:awhite94@jhmi.edu), Isaac Kamola: [ikamola@trincoll.edu](mailto:ikamola@trincoll.edu)).

The Communication and Outreach editor is a new position we designed to help expand our journal's global readership and engage PEWS members and other readers in the work of supporting and producing our open access journal. As many readers know, *JWSR* is one of the most established open access scholarly journals (founded in 1995), and we're fighting the growing corporate concentration in academic publishing to keep scholarly research free and accessible to readers around the world. This requires concerted efforts to develop sustainable models for producing this important resource and extending its global reach. Harnessing the unpaid labor we all do as authors, reviewers, and editors to nurture and support the global knowledge commons takes intentionality, and our new communications and outreach editors will help us do this. Significantly, they will have strong support from a growing world movement for open access publishing, which has made great strides over recent years to resist the corporate appropriation and enclosure of scholarly research.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, the Journal of World-Systems Research is published by the [University Library System](#) at the University of Pittsburgh, whose librarians have contributed to the open access movement by supporting software development and providing an open journal publishing platform for scholarly journals. The Open Journal System (OJS) software our system uses is supported by the [Public Knowledge Project](#) (PKP), which is "a multi-university initiative developing (free) open source software and conducting research to improve the quality and reach of scholarly publishing." Librarians, technologists, and others committed to supporting the knowledge commons dedicate substantial amounts of volunteer time and talent to the collective work of building the tools needed for open publishing to thrive.

The response to the pandemic highlights the ongoing need for sustainable open access publishing like *JWSR*. Many publishers offered “temporary open access” to resources early in the COVID-19 pandemic. While widely praised for making resources available, most of these temporary offers ended in May, leaving researchers, instructors, and students once again struggling to gain access. [For-profit publishers also sued the Internet Archive’s National Emergency Library](#) for expanding access to content during a pandemic, causing the emergency program to end in mid-June. Commercial publishers have also been inflating the cost of ebooks and other electronic resources and applying convoluted use restrictions (see, e.g., this [blog post](#) from the International Federation of Library Associations, or this [tracking project of access to research](#) specifically on COVID-19), making it even more difficult and expensive to gain access to materials. Thus, we’re reminded of the urgent need for ongoing, sustainable, and truly open access publishing for the purpose of knowledge production and sharing. We cannot let our access to scholarship and readers depend on the whims and market interests of for-profit publishers. *JWSR* editors, authors, and readers are already participating in open access through this journal. This pandemic should encourage everyone to expand their commitments to open scholarship by making as much of their research and instruction materials openly available as they can and by supporting and promoting open access, open data, and open education efforts of their colleagues and institutions.<sup>2</sup>

This fresh new team comes with a wealth of ambition and ideas for leading the *JWSR* in years to come. They will continue the work begun under prior editorial teams to better institutionalize and routinize *JWSR*’s policies and practices as part of our becoming an official American Sociological Association journal in 2009. They will continue our effort to renew and rebuild our Editorial Board with an eye to enhancing global representation and diversity. Key among the projects they plan to implement are efforts to build the journal’s global audience of readers and scholarly contributors. With a member of the editorial team based in Europe, and expanded capacity for outreach, they are well positioned to help us reach more readers around the world. The team plans to begin publishing abstracts of articles in multiple languages in future issues, and this will help more non-native English speakers identify and access relevant *JWSR* content. In addition to working to transcend linguistic boundaries that have limited the reach of our journal, we are working to also transcend the disciplinary boundaries that characterize our profession and undermine the unidisciplinary character of world-systems analysis. Under the leadership of Christopher Chase-Dunn, a team of scholars is working to establish an inter-university consortium to support and promote world-systems research and publishing. Among other benefits, the consortium will provide access to global and multidisciplinary scholar networks as well as institutional support for the journal, helping us reach a more diverse array of readers and contributors.

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<sup>2</sup> Thanks to Lauren B. Collister, Director of the Office of Scholarly Communication and Publishing at University of Pittsburgh’s University Library System, for help with this background on open access and scholarly publishing and recent developments. Additional resources related to open access and professional issues are available at [http://wiki.inosa.mayfirst.org/index.php?title=Defending\\_the\\_Knowledge\\_Commons](http://wiki.inosa.mayfirst.org/index.php?title=Defending_the_Knowledge_Commons).

As I sign off with my last issue as *JWSR* editor, I want to thank those who served with me, especially Jenn Bair, who stayed on for an extended 8-year term as book review editor and brought some truly innovative ideas and content to the section. Scott Byrd was our technical editor who put himself out of work by helping us move the journal from its own independent site to our current online publishing platform. This helped move us into the modern era of open access publishing, and it entailed no small amount of work! I also want to thank the managing editors who served over the years, including Brittany Duncan, Caitlin Schroering, David Ruvolo, George Weddington, Danny Burrige, Ray Kanemoto, Adam Brode, and Joshua McDermott. Finally, my editorial team and our journal owe a huge debt of gratitude to our publishers, the University of Pittsburgh's University Library System (ULS). Not only did ULS staff help us transfer twenty years of content onto a new platform, but they spent time helping us all learn more about the political economy of publishing, and they guided our work to inform PEWS members and readers about the importance of open access publishing. As a part of a growing open access movement, they are helping support an essential foundation that will enable us to advance and defend the knowledge commons. I look forward to continuing to support the *JWSR* and open access publishing from the ranks of the PEWS section membership, and I encourage readers to continue promoting the journal and submitting research articles and special issue ideas.

As the world faces a worsening pandemic amid interlinked systemic crises of inequality and ecological damage, it is now more important than ever that we all find ways to support and nurture critical and creative thinking about alternative world-systems that will enable all living beings and future generations to live in dignity, equity and justice. In that regard, I'm inspired to learn from contributor Joyce Hope Scott of the work of the International Network of Scholar Activists for African Reparations (INOSAAR), which works to promote "academic and community engagement that is rooted in the praxis of decolonization, pluriversality, and cognitive justice." This mission, I believe, complements the aims of the *Journal of World-Systems Research*, and I look forward to seeing how the journal develops in dialogue with anti-systemic movements and projects like INOSAAR.