

**EDITOR'S REPORT 2007-2008**  
***SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION: A QUARTERLY REVIEW***

7 July 2008

David Yamane, Editor  
Department of Sociology  
Wake Forest University  
Winston-Salem, NC 27106  
sored@wfu.edu

**I. Policies and Practices**

This year we made no major changes in our policies and practices. Receiving one hard copy and one electronic copy of each manuscript, along with a submission checklist and a \$25 submission fee for non-members has worked well.

**II. Editorial Board**

I continue to rotate one-third of our 18 associate editors off the editorial board each year and appoint six new associate editors to (up to) three year terms. I continue to say “up to” because the next editor of *Sociology of Religion* is under no obligation to keep these individuals on the editorial board, though as I have said before, I hope the next editor will maintain this practice. Although we lose six good associate editors every year, it also keeps the board fresh and more evenly distributes the editorial workload.

I would like to thank the six associate editors whose terms ended in August 2008 for their dedicated service to the journal and the profession: Anthony Alumkal (Ilf School of Theology), Graeme Lang (City University of Hong Kong), Lina Molokotos-Liederman (Exeter University), David Smilde (University of Georgia), Melissa Wilcox (Whitman College), and Melissa Wilde (University of Pennsylvania). I am also happy to announce the appointment of six new associate editors to take their place:

- Orit Avishai, Fordham University
- Wendy Cadge, Brandeis University
- Kevin Dougherty, Baylor University
- Kathleen Jenkins, College of William and Mary
- Robert Mackin, Texas A&M University
- Brian Steensland, Indiana University

As always, all of our associate editors are listed on the inside front cover of every issue of *Sociology of Religion*, as well as in Appendix 1 of this report.

### **III. Design Changes**

We continue to have various problems with Indiana University Printing. In my 2006-2007 report, I noted that the color on the Summer 2007 issue (Vol. 68, No. 2) is darker than on the Spring 2007 issue. In later issues, this was corrected. It also became apparent when I received the Summer 2008 issue (Vol. 69, No. 2) that the mastheads of each issue are not in the same location, so when they are together on a bookshelf, they are misaligned.

These printer's errors go against our concerted efforts to have *Sociology of Religion* present the most professional image possible to our members, subscribers, and the professional community at large.

I have also had regular problems receiving damaged copies of the journal from Indiana University Printing. When they ship my copies (for distribution to authors, reviewers, and publishers whose books are reviewed), if they do not pack them correctly the ink on the covers get smudged from the journals rubbing together in transit. Several times I have had to ask them to send more copies and remind them to pack them in the particular way we agreed upon.

### **IV. Staff Support**

#### ***Book Review Editor***

Jerome Baggett of the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley continues to serve as book review editor. He is submitting his annual report separate from this report.

#### ***Editorial Assistance***

Margaret Polzer continues to act as a managing editor of sorts. She works eight hours a week (on average) for the journal, coordinating the work of the journal's interns, overseeing manuscript processing, and editing copy.

The sociology department at Wake Forest University continues to allow me to give independent study credit to undergraduate students who work as editorial interns for the journal. In the fall of 2007, Kayla Landers and Marianne Wilson served as interns, and in the spring of 2008, Nathan Frazier and Emily Mathews served. Each intern works about 4.5 hours per week processing manuscripts, corresponding with authors and reviewers, and doing some light editing.

### **V. Editorial Activity**

Because this report is due in July of each year, this section covers our activities for the 12 months from July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008. Where possible, I also provide comparative information based on previous reports. The information in this section is summarized in the table in Appendix 2.

#### ***Manuscript Flow***

We received 110 total manuscripts over the past 12 months, including 80 new manuscripts and 30 revised manuscripts. 102 of these were "regular" submissions, that is, not special issue

submissions or papers commissioned in any way. This represents a 16 percent increase over the previous 12 months. Among the eight non-regular submissions were Kevin Christiano's 2006 and James Davidson's 2007 Presidential Addresses, Joseph Micon's 2007 Paul Hanly Furfey Lecture, four comments on Christian Smith's "Why Christianity Works," and Smith's reply.

The 110 total manuscripts we received from July 2006-June 2007 reflect a 23.6 percent increase in the flow of manuscripts to the journal, especially revised manuscripts which increased by 30 percent. Although we received considerably more commissioned manuscripts, the 102 regular submissions still represents a 16 percent increase over the previous 12 months. The upward trend in submissions to the journal are visually represented in Figure 1. This signals to us the increasing attractiveness of submission to the journal.

### ***Editorial Lag***

A large part of the attractiveness of submitting to *Sociology of Religion*, I believe, is the reasonable editorial lag time the journal continues to promise and realize. Our stated goal is to render an editorial judgment on every manuscript within 16 weeks of receipt, an attractive lag time for many potential contributors.

For 2006-2007, our editorial lag time for all manuscripts we received was around 14 weeks (mean = 14.3, median = 13.7). Because there were so few deflections that year, the average for peer-reviewed manuscripts was only slightly higher. For the past 12 months, our editorial lag for all manuscripts was *under 13 weeks* (mean = 12.1, median = 12.7), and for those manuscripts that received peer review it was just over 14 weeks (mean = 14.1, median = 14.3).

The fact that we have received many more manuscripts yet have decreased our editorial lag time on three of four measures (all except median for peer-reviewed manuscripts) reflects the concerted efforts of a great many people. This includes our reviewers (who continue to submit their reviews in the six week time frame we request), our paid staff (who often work nights, weekends, and holidays), and our interns (whose work is always diligent and intelligent).

### ***Acceptance Rates***

Our primary acceptance rate is the number of papers accepted for publication divided by the number of decisions rendered on regular submissions (i.e., excluding papers for special issues or those solicited by the editor). Using this measure, our official acceptance rate for the past year is 14.9 percent (11 acceptances out of 74 decisions, including conditional acceptances).

In the past year, I "deflected" (i.e., rejected prior to peer review) 13 manuscripts. Our acceptance rate rises to 18.0 percent (11 acceptances out of 61 decisions) – when we factor out these deflections and consider only those manuscripts that were peer-reviewed.

These acceptance rates are both lower than the previous year, when we accepted 17.1 percent of all manuscripts submitted and 18.75 percent of peer-review manuscripts submitted. If the number of revised manuscripts we receive continues to increase (e.g., from 23 to 30 in the past two years), our acceptance rate will likely increase as well. To wit: during my editorship, we have accepted just 8.2% but over half (52.6%) of revised manuscripts (including 100% of second revisions). This could pose a problem in the future because more submissions plus a higher acceptance rate equals more articles to be published.

## VI. Looking Ahead

Two significant issues lie ahead for the Association for the Sociology of Religion as concerns the journal: (1) search for a new editor, and (2) the possibility of having a professional publisher assume responsibility for production, distribution, and marketing of the journal.

### *Possible Move to a Professional Publisher*

I expect that the ASR Council will consider a motion from the ASR Publication Committee to enter into negotiations with a professional publisher to assume responsibility for (but not ownership of) *Sociology of Religion*. For the record, I have read the proposals that have been submitted and communicated my feedback on them to the Publication Committee. I am a strong advocate for this move, for two major reasons.

(1) Infrastructural support: As the journal continues to become a more attractive venue for publishing in our field, the burden on the editorial office to manage the manuscript flow, production, and distribution of the journal will only increase. I believe a publisher will be able to provide key infrastructural support for the editorial office, thereby improving the substantive quality of the journal.

Being self-published creates some significant inefficiencies in our operation. In particular, the editorial team ends up doing in-house many time consuming tasks that could be better handled by a professional publisher. For example,

- Copy-editing manuscripts for grammar and to ensure consistency of style in citations, references, tables, etc.
- Sending out proofs to authors and conveying corrections back to the printer
- Correcting problems with proofs that result largely from the fact that our printer does not understand journal publishing
- Securing “assignment of rights” from authors
- Sending out copies of the journal to authors, book reviewers, and publishers whose books we review.

All of these things, but particularly the first, take up editorial staff time that would be better spent working with authors and manuscripts to improve the quality of what we publish.

There are also a number of small frustrations that could be eliminated by working with a professional publisher. For example, in addition to the ones mentioned in Section III above, I also have to remind Indiana University Printing to send me a PDF copy of the page proofs and of the final version of each issue *every issue*.

(2) Library acquisitions and electronic distribution: The era of individual libraries purchasing individual journals which are sent in hard copy to the library to sit on a shelf is coming to an end. Electronic access to *Sociology of Religion* is available, back issues through JSTOR and all issues through EBSCO Host, but electronic *subscription* to the journal is not available. For the journal not only to survive, but to thrive, into the future, I believe it will need to be made available

in hard copy and electronic subscriptions, and to be sold to libraries as part of "packages" of journals.

Also, most publishers will give the journal a dedicated website as a platform from which people (especially members) can access individual articles. Publishers will also help to publicize the journal, for example by emailing tables of contents to individuals who choose that option.

Moreover, most publishers have the ability to make an individual article available on-line even before the issue in which it appears is published. So, if you have an article coming out in the Winter 2008 issue, but it is all ready to go by June 2008, it can be made available electronically "pre-publication." This is attractive, both to us and to those considering publishing with us, in terms of getting articles in *Sociology of Religion* into circulation as quickly as possible.

For all the work we put into the journal, we would like the articles to be read and used by scholars. Professional publishers have a vested interest in as wide a distribution of our journal as possible and a capacity to realize that interest organizationally and technologically. They also have the organizational capacity to monitor and give us feedback on usage.

### ***Editorial Succession***

My three year term as editor expires at the end of 2009, with the publication of Volume 70 of *Sociology of Religion*. Although I am pleased with the condition and direction of the journal, I have had to devote more time than is professionally responsible to this position in order to maintain the pace and editorial standards I have set for myself. Therefore, I do not intend to seek a second three-year term as editor.

That said, if the ASR Council decides to move the journal to a professional publishers in either 2009 or 2010, I am willing to extend my term for one year, through 2010, to ensure a smooth transition to the new publisher - if the ASR Council so desires.

If the ASR Council decides to continue self-publishing the journal, I will conclude my service as editor at the end of my initial term. I am receiving and accepting enough manuscripts at this point that if the council appoints a new editor at the 2009 annual meeting and that editor is prepared to begin receiving manuscripts on September 1, 2009, there should be no problem with this transition. I will, of course, assist in the transition in any and every way possible to ensure its success.

## **Appendix 1:** **Associate Editors**

*Completed terms in August 2008:*

Antony Alumkal, Iliff School of Theology  
Graeme Lang, City University of Hong Kong  
Lina Molokotos-Liederman, Exeter University  
David Smilde, University of Georgia  
Melissa Wilcox, Whitman College  
Melissa Wilde, University of Pennsylvania

*Serving through August 2009:*

R. Saylor Breckenridge, Wake Forest University  
Omar McRoberts, University of Chicago  
Bill Mirola, Marian College  
Margarita Mooney, Princeton University  
Jen'nan Ghazal Read, University of California-Irvine  
Phil Zuckerman, Pitzer College

*Serving at least through August 2009, but no longer than August 2010:*

H.B. Cavalcanti, James Madison University  
Terrence D. Hill, University of Miami  
Lene van de Aa Kuhle, University of Aarhus (Denmark)  
Matthew T. Loveland, Le Moyne College  
Sarah MacMillen, Duquesne University  
Genevieve Zubrzycki, University of Michigan

*Serving at least through August 2009, but no longer than August 2011:*

Orit Avishai, Fordham University  
Wendy Cadge, Brandeis University  
Kevin Dougherty, Baylor University  
Kathleen Jenkins, College of William and Mary  
Robert Mackin, Texas A&M University  
Brian Steensland, Indiana University

## Appendix 2: Summary of Editorial Activity

	July 1, 2007-June 30, 2008		July 1, 2006-June 30, 2007	
<b>A. Manuscripts Considered</b>				
1. Total	110		89	
a. New Manuscripts		80		66
b. Revised Manuscripts		30		23
<b>B. Review Process</b>				
1. Screened/Accepted for Review (Regular Submissions)	89		85	
a. Rejected outright		25		24
b. Rejected – revise and resubmit		25		31
c. Conditional acceptance		9		10
d. Outright acceptance		2		2
e. Withdrawn		1		0
f. Pending		27		18
2. Screened by Editor/Rejected (Regular Submissions)	13		3	
3. Special Issue Papers Accepted for Publication	0		0	
4. Commissioned by Editor Accepted for Publication	8*		1	
<b>C. Acceptance Rates (Regular Submissions)</b>				
1. Papers Accepted/All Decisions**	14.9%		17.1%	
2. Papers Accepted/Non-deflect Decisions**	18.0%		18.75%	
<b>D. Editorial Lag (Weeks)</b>				
1. Range for Peer-Reviewed Manuscripts	3 to 29		6 to 34	
2. Mean for All Manuscripts	12.1		14.3	
3. Median for All Manuscripts	12.7		13.7	
4. Mean for Peer-Reviewed Manuscripts	14.1		14.7	
5. Median for Peer-Reviewed Manuscripts	14.3		13.9	
<b>E. Items Published and Forthcoming</b>				
	<b>Vol. 69, Nos. 1-4:</b>		<b>Vol. 68, Nos. 1-4:</b>	
1. Articles		14		14
2. Book Reviews		32		32
3. Special Essays, Reviews, Symposia, Comments***		9		13

### Notes

\*Includes: Kevin Christiano's and James Davidson's Presidential Addresses, Joseph Micon's Paul Hanly Furfey lecture, four comments on Christian Smith's "Why Christianity Works," and Smith's reply.

\*\*Regular submissions only. Includes conditional acceptances.

\*\*\* Includes Presidential Addresses and Furfey Lectures, but not editor's columns.