

FROM THE EDITORS

As the *JHET* editorial transition began in July 2008, we anticipated this first issue for which we would be responsible with not a little anxiety. *JHET* has grown in quality and reputation under its previous editors to become a journal of which members of the *History of Economics Society* are justifiably very proud. It is a little daunting to have so much to live up to.

In those first few weeks, Steve Medema and Carol Bauer graciously found time to answer both our big questions, and to enlighten us about all the little things that go into editing a journal. As the files containing manuscripts somewhere in the editorial process began to appear, and as we received new submissions from both long-time readers and authors with whose names are less familiar, we began to relax. It became clear that the most pressing problem we would face would not be to find enough work of high quality to publish, but rather to find space to showcase all the imaginative and careful history that is being submitted.

A journal is a community of scholars, with each of us playing in turn the roles of author, reader and referee. The standards and scope of the journal are determined by its community. Imaginative essays challenge us to reconsider how one ought to do history of economics. Referees struggle to encourage new voices and new insights, while ensuring that the quality of historical scholarship shines in each article that is published. Ultimately, the quality of a journal is ensured by the quality of its submissions.

Editors have a peculiar role to play in this community of scholars. We can encourage new voices to persevere when we think we detect a spark in a submission that does not quite merit publication. We can suggest possible pathways for an author faced with seemingly contradictory referee reports. We can ensure that every submission receives a fair reading. We can listen and read and encourage, but ultimately it is the readers, the authors and the referees who set the tone and content of a journal. We have been extremely fortunate to inherit an active, tolerant and demanding community. We hold one another to very high standards, but we see referee reports that struggle to ensure that dissenting positions are heard.

As editors, we follow one simple principle: we will listen and read and, in the end, take direction from our readers and our authors. *JHET* has always been an ecumenical journal open to many different ways of doing history, and we do not propose to change that. Some authors privilege textual exegesis, others bring insights from the history of science and still others approach the history of economics as economists, reconstructing past ideas in more familiar language. Many of the papers we see make subtle and thoughtful use of archival evidence, while others explore oral history or life writing. A strong community is a diverse community, and we welcome submissions from a wide variety of perspectives that use a range of historical methods. We particularly encourage imaginative new approaches. We will do our best to find competent referees whose complementary expertise will help authors write better and

stronger essays. The only restriction we impose is that, as a journal in the history of economics, manuscripts that ultimately appear in print ought to be historically contextualized and economically literate.

The changes you will see over the coming months and years will use technology to make our job more efficient and effective. Our planned move to an electronic interface will allow us to better manage the increasing flow of manuscripts from around the world and to make optimal use of our editorial board members and referees.

It is, ultimately, the *JHET* community that will decide the quality, the scope and the content of this journal and we are impressed by the dedication to quality and diversity that has characterized our interactions with our community to date. We are, all of us, a conspiracy of scholars, virtually a cabal, dedicated to building on the strengths that already characterize *JHET* and the history of economics.

Marcel Boumans
Evelyn L. Forget