
Editors Note: Happy Fiftieth Anniversary to the *Law & Society Review*!

Writing the editorial preface to the fiftieth anniversary volume of the *Law & Society Review* is a humbling exercise. For us, this 2016 Volume is the beginning of our third and last year as editors. We will soon pass the torch on to the next editorial team, Jeannine Bell (Indiana), Susan Sterett (Virginia Tech), and Margot Young (British Columbia). We, of course, stand on the shoulders of law and society giants who preceded us as editors. Their names speak to the history of the Law & Society Association, to what it stands for, and how it has evolved. In reverse chronological order: Jon Goldberg-Hiller and David T. Johnson, the first team of editors in the journal's history, Carroll Seron, Herbert M. Kritzer, Joseph Sanders, Susan S. Silbey, William M. O'Barr, Frank Munger, Shari Seidman Diamond, Robert L. (Bob) Kidder, Richard O. Lempert, Joel B. Grossman, Richard L. (Rick) Abel, Marc Galanter, Samuel (Sam) Krislov, and, at the beginning of it all, Richard D. (Red) Schwartz.

The biggest change facing the journal (and perhaps the most important benefit) throughout its five decades has been the massive growth in the number of papers authors submit. This growth is due to the increase in law and society scholarship, the solidification of the journal's reputation, and the general strengthening of thematic fields vis-à-vis traditional disciplines. Just in the past two decades, the number of submissions increased from 120 per year in the late 1990s to 140 in the early 2000s, and then to 170 in the late 2000s and 270 in the early 2010s. Today our submissions are well above 300. While submissions have skyrocketed, space, the allotted number of pages, has been relatively stable. This means that the acceptance rate has dropped to below 10 percent. Gratefully, other law and society journals have appeared on the scene, domestically and internationally, and we recently commented on the ecology of outlets when we included, in issue 3 of Volume 49, a note by the editors of *Droit et Société* on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of that journal. For the *Review*, growth and the necessary selectivity have consequences for the way in which the journal is run and, ultimately, for its content. It is not by chance

that we are the second editor team in a row and that we will be followed by a third team. Processing an ever growing number of manuscripts indeed becomes a team effort.

At the 2014 Annual LSA meetings, the fiftieth anniversary meetings of the Law & Society Association, Malcolm Feeley organized a panel in which he brought together some of the earliest and some of the most recent editors of the *Review*. He invited them to compare the early and late volumes in the journal's history. Such exercise easily reveals substantial change. Newsletter elements, part of the first volumes, disappeared early on. The journal also lost the "guideline" quality that accompanied the early search for an identity. Invited by the editors, Rick Lempert, for example, wrote a contribution on Research Design for Legal Impact Studies and Carl Auerbach reflected on Legal Tasks for Sociologists (both 1966). Explicit and spirited exchange also waned, like that between Jerry Skolnick and Auerbach in the same 1966 issue. And, while early contributions reflected great intellectual sophistication, illustrated by Aaron Cicourel's article "Kinship, Family, and Divorce in Comparative Family Law" (1967) among many, a special issue dedicated to a purely descriptive account of a socio-legal issue would no longer be conceivable today. A 1967 issue offered such a set of accounts on the, albeit important, topic of school segregation in a series of cities. Indeed, methodological sophistication has increased over the years. At the same time, today's work may be less groundbreaking, some approaching a state of normal science and all reflecting a higher degree of thematic, theoretical, and methodological specialization. Challenges to integration across specialties are one consequence.

The increase in submissions is also associated with a changing role of the editors. While we use the following terms cautiously, there is in the work of editing something of a shift from scholarly entrepreneurs to bureaucrats, from innovators to normal science scholars, and from generalists to specialists (who depend increasingly on the judgment of specialized peers). There is also routinization of charisma, and we are reminded of Ferdinand Toennies' old theme of a shift from community to society. Members of the early Law and Society Association knew each other and each other's scholarship well. That most certainly is no longer true today. And yet, we are wary of romanticizing the past. Growing size of membership and scholarship has also brought growing diversity of scholarly and personal backgrounds of those who contribute to our project. Routinization, bureaucratization and society-type organization are certainly associated with—and possibly causally related to—growth in diversity, along lines of gender, race and ethnicity, national background, and theoretical and methodological orientation.

In this context, we can also point at an impressive trend toward internationalization. Authors we have published during our editorship thus far are predominantly from the United States but also from Australia, Canada, Columbia, France, Israel, Singapore, Sweden, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom. We take particular pride in publishing scholars from a variety of countries, especially scholars from countries against which parts of the scholarly community today direct the threat of boycott. These foreign scholars are often among the most liberal proponents of democratic and human rights-respecting policies and principles. They are frequent critics of their governments when the latter seem to offend against these principles. In addition to the national background of authors, the diversity of countries covered in their work has increased even more. During our time as editors thus far we have published analyses of Canada, Columbia, India, Israel, Japan, Myanmar, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Romania, South Africa, South Korea, South Sudan, Sudan, Taiwan, and the United States.

And yet, despite much change, some things remain constant. We are pleased that Carroll Seron opens this anniversary volume with her presidential address on “The Two Faces of Law and Inequality: From Critique to the Promise of Situated, Pragmatic Policy.” Carroll reminds us of the original mission of the Law & Society Association and its journal. Concerns with social inequality and discrimination (initially along racial and class lines) and the role of law in alleviating such discrimination and associated injustices, continue to be on the minds and agendas of current law and society scholars. Today’s *Law & Society Review* contributors, and members of the association, are mindful of the importance of solid social science scholarship that informs us of the mechanisms through which inequalities are reproduced and of strategies and institutions by which their reproduction is disrupted, including legal mechanisms. Such scholarship is a crucial precondition for advancing societies in which all members have equal chances to unfold their potential, and in which a dignified life and human rights are secured for all.

It is in this spirit that we end our last preface with a quotation of what the reader encounters in every issue of the journal: “The *Law & Society Review* is a peer-reviewed publication for work bearing on the relationship between society and the legal process, including articles or notes of interest to the research community in general, new theoretical developments, results of empirical studies, and comments on the field or its methods of inquiry. The *Review* is broadly interdisciplinary and welcomes work from any tradition of scholarship concerned with the cultural, economic, political, psychological and social aspects of law and legal systems.” The principles are clear while they also leave room for

interpretation to those who take on the task of editing the journal. This is as it should be.

We are proud to serve the *Law & Society Review* with its impressive tradition. We are grateful to all who make it work, from authors, reviewers, members of the editorial board (many of whom took on substantial reviewing commitments) and—during our tenure as editors—our reliable editorial assistants, Erez Garnai, Maron Sorenson, Wenjie Liao, and the journal's long-term and outstanding managing editor, Danielle McClellan.

We congratulate the *Law & Society Review* on its fiftieth anniversary, and we wish many happy returns!

Timothy R. Johnson and Joachim J. Savelsberg