

## This Is Not Enough. We Can Do Better.

The Editorial Board of *portal: Libraries and the Academy*

From its outset, academic publishing has failed to offer a level playing field for authors. The largest analysis of scholarly output ever conducted, examining cross-disciplinary content spanning five centuries, found both that women accounted for only 22 percent of published authors and that, in multiauthored articles, they were also underrepresented in the first and final author positions.<sup>1</sup> In the United States, in addition to the gender challenge, institutional affiliation can unduly influence the publication pipeline, privileging authors from the most prestigious institutions and reducing opportunities for scholars from those that are less-renowned, who nonetheless also must publish or perish.<sup>2</sup> Going a step further, colleagues at institutions abroad often find a still higher bar as they struggle to publish in English.<sup>3</sup> Submissions from these authors may face yet another hurdle if the peer-review process does not provide a mechanism for anonymity or encouragement.<sup>4</sup> Discrimination is multidimensional and insidious.

### Our Actions to Date

By the early 2000s, the scholarly publishing landscape had begun to shift, with the Web and open access offering additional paths to the creation and discovery of content. At that time, *portal: Libraries and the Academy* was launched, thanks to the efforts of a stalwart group of librarians who determined “that it was time to take a stand similar to our colleagues in science, who were at last rebelling against the deleterious effects of commercialism on the exchange of scholarly information.”<sup>5</sup> From its start, *portal* has aspired to be a publication like no other. In its first issue, founding editor Gloriana St. Clair underscored the journal’s foundational tenets: to provide an affordable subscription alternative to other serials in the field through partnership with a university press (Johns Hopkins); to offer “a more inviting, constructive, and productive environment for authors” through mentoring; and to model best practices in scholarly communication, including faster article review and turnaround time.<sup>6</sup> By adhering to these principles, *portal* has remained responsive to authors and their needs in our changing scholarly environment, but this is not enough.

This past January, in an editorial marking *portal*’s 20th anniversary, we outlined additional priorities for the future. First among them was expanding inclusivity to



“extend further, to ensure the fullest possible range of voices among both contributors and board members and wider geographic representation.”<sup>7</sup> We had, during the past five years, already worked diligently to make progress in these areas. We had done this, first, by strengthening our already significant investment in mentoring and our commitment to providing deep, rich feedback to less experienced authors, including those for whom English is not the first language. We also instituted new means to diversify our content, in particular our “Global Perspectives” feature, in which we have published papers from authors worldwide.<sup>8</sup> During the past three years alone, well over 100 authors from outside North America have submitted to our journal, and their contributions accounted for nearly 20 percent of our content. Within the United States, we seek geographic representation from across all states, regions, and territories, and we welcome submissions not only from authors at the most distinguished universities but also from those at smaller colleges, tribal institutions, and community colleges. But this, too, is not enough.

A journal is guided by its mission and values and steered by its Editorial Board.<sup>9</sup> *portal* has continued to diversify board membership, expanding it to include librarians and other members of the academy, from early-career scholars to established authors and practitioners, who represent a breadth of academic institutions and associations of different sizes and scopes. Our board has solid experience in all areas of academic library practice and theory. Our double-blind peer-review process assures that *portal* referees, all of whom are board members, do not know who the authors are; likewise, the identity of referees remains completely unknown to authors. To minimize bias, the editor does not serve as a reviewer nor render a tiebreaking opinion on any manuscript, should one be needed. Board members strive to do a close and careful reading of all submissions, to be respectful and constructive with feedback, and to expedite the review process to ensure that authors can keep pace with tenure clocks or meet other personal deadlines.<sup>10</sup> This, however, is not enough.

### An Urgent Call to Action

In response to the intensifying focus on the enduring injustices that have plagued the academy and our society, the *portal* Editorial Board met in June and July 2020 to discuss actions that address equity and structural racism. As a board, we acknowledge that

- There is systemic, inherent racism in library and information science that fosters and sustains supermajority publishing by white authors.<sup>11</sup>
- The library and information science field, in general, suffers from a lack of diversity, particularly in library leadership and administration, and there is a need to support and amplify the voices of younger, diverse scholars in our profession.<sup>12</sup>
- Despite considerable efforts at diverse recruitment over the past three years, the *portal* Editorial Board remains predominantly white.

Each of these aspects of the status quo must change. Just as *portal*'s founders outlined important actions for our journal two decades ago, we now commit to lighting a better path forward for scholarship in library and information science, by our example and through our content. By way of the strategic directions outlined in the next sections, we



pledge to build an even more inclusive journal for future generations of *portal* authors and readers.

### **Increase the Diversity of the Editorial Board**

Our Editorial Board currently has 36 members from a wide variety of backgrounds. They are librarians, deans, faculty, and administrators from universities, colleges, and academic organizations across the United States and Canada. We recognize that the composition of our board must change, to bring a wider spectrum of voices and viewpoints to our journal's pages. Board members have pledged to personally reach out to their professional networks to recruit new members from underrepresented groups who have a greater diversity of traditions, experiences, and perspectives; with a passion for quality scholarship; and with a dedication to mentoring those prospective authors who need it. We acknowledge that building a less homogeneous board will take time, but we will keep this as a continuing, primary priority as board members retire and terms expire. We also will intensify efforts to promote board opportunities via our social media channels, where they can reach the greatest diversity of potential candidates. Throughout, we will be accountable and transparent and will continue to provide updates on progress toward building greater equity and representation on the board.

### **Expand Opportunities for New and Emerging Professional Authors**

*portal*'s "Global Perspectives" feature was created to showcase the research and practice of international scholars and, with our two other features, to provide an additional non-peer-reviewed option, especially for novice authors.<sup>13</sup> We will continue our efforts to include previously unheard voices in our journal by actively soliciting articles and guest editorials from underrepresented groups and encouraging and publishing new, rigorous scholarship on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in libraries and the academy. As noted in our January editorial, we will build upon our commitment to explore open access options, making discovery of *portal* content as seamless as possible for readers worldwide. With the Johns Hopkins University Press, and as part of the diverse Project MUSE collection, we are dedicated to "sustaining diversity and independence in scholarly publishing."<sup>14</sup>

### **Commit to the Use of Inclusive Language**

To ensure that nonbinary authors have a welcoming environment in which to publish, *portal*'s guidelines for authors have been revised to underscore that, through its editorial practices, the journal "supports the development and evolution of inclusive language, including the use of the singular *they*" and "encourages authors to refer to themselves by their chosen pronouns and to honor that practice for individuals referenced in their articles."<sup>15</sup> Beyond gender, *portal* aspires to ensure that authors and readers feel respected regardless of race, religion, age, education, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, or geographic location.



## The Next 20 Years

This is the first editorial jointly authored by members of the Editorial Board in *portal*'s 20-year history. It demonstrates our shared commitment to leveling the playing field. This is more than a statement; it is an intentional plan of action—a commitment to leveraging our voices, leading by example, and individually and collectively advocating for much-needed and long-overdue change. We invite every reader to join us in identifying talent and scholarship to accomplish these strategic priorities. We welcome input on additional measures the board could take to keep *portal* at the forefront of reform in academic publishing and social justice.

This still may not be enough, but together we can do better.

## Notes

1. Jevin D. West, Jennifer Jacquet, Molly M. King, Shelley J. Correll, and Carl T. Bergstrom, "The Role of Gender in Scholarly Authorship," *PLoS ONE* 8, 7 (2013): e66212, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0066212>. For a summary of the project, see Robin Wilson, "Scholarly Publishing's Gender Gap," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 22, 2012, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/scholarly-publishings-gender-gap/>.
2. Yaniv Reingewertz and Carmela Lutmar, "Academic In-Group Bias: An Empirical Examination of the Link between Author and Journal Affiliation," *SSRN*, April 5, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2946811>. See also Colleen Flaherty, "When Journals Play Favorites," *Inside Higher Ed*, March 2, 2018, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/03/02/study-finds-evidence-institutional-favoritism-academic-publishing>.
3. See, for example, David Bakewell, "Publish in English, or Perish?" *Nature* 356, 648 (1992), <https://doi.org/10.1038/356648a0>; Mario S. Di Bitetti and Julián A. Ferreras, "Publish (in English) or Perish: The Effect on Citation Rate of Using Languages Other Than English in Scientific Publications," *Ambio* 46, 1 (2017): 121–27; Ana Bocanegra-Valle, "'English Is My Default Language': Voices from LSP [languages for specific purposes] Scholars Publishing in a Multilingual Journal," *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 13, 1 (2014): 65–77.
4. See, for example, Anthony G. Greenwald and Linda Hamilton Krieger, "Implicit Bias: Scientific Foundations," *California Law Review* 94, 4 (2006): 945–67; Ginger Pinholster, "Journals and Funders Confront Implicit Bias in Peer Review," *Science* 352, 6289 (2016): 1067–68.
5. Charles B. Lowry, "Passing the Baton," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 4, 1 (2004): vii.
6. Gloriana St. Clair, "Through *portal*," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 1, 1 (2001): v.
7. Marianne Ryan, "Coming of Age: *portal* at 20," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 20, 1 (2020): 1–5.
8. The "Global Perspectives" feature debuted in the July 2015 issue of *portal*. See Marianne Ryan, "Promoting Global Understanding," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 15, 3 (2015): 387–88.
9. *portal*'s statement of "Editorial Scope and Philosophy" can be found at <https://www.press.jhu.edu/journals/portal-libraries-and-academy>; the statement of "Publication Ethics" of Johns Hopkins University Press at <https://www.press.jhu.edu/journals/lesprit-createur/publication-ethics>.
10. On average, each year we receive upward of 30 unsolicited testimonials from authors who have submitted to *portal*—including those whose submissions ultimately were rejected—acknowledging the improvements made by the feedback and mentoring support they received.
11. Joseph C. Hermanowicz and Kristen A. Clayton, "Race and Publishing in Sociology," *American Sociologist* 51, 2 (2020): 197–214, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12108-020-09436->



- 2; Dolores Delgado Bernal and Octavio Villalpando, "An Apartheid of Knowledge in Academia: The Struggle over the 'Legitimate' Knowledge of Faculty of Color," *Equity & Excellence in Education* 35, 2 (2002): 169–80, <https://doi.org/10.1080/713845282>; Bharat Mehra and LaVerne Gray, "An 'Owning Up' of White-IST [information sciences and technology] Trends in LIS to Further Real Transformations," *Library Quarterly* 90, 2 (2020): 189–239, <https://doi.org/10.1086/707674>.
12. Todd Honma, "Trippin' over the Color Line: The Invisibility of Race in Library and Information Studies," *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies* 1, 2 (2005): 1–26, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4nj0w1mp>; Janet Ceja Alcalá, Mónica Colón-Aguirre, Nicole Cooke, and Brenton Stewart, "A Critical Dialogue: Faculty of Color in Library and Information Science," *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies* 13, 2 (2017): 1–14, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1gq2s8q5>; Amelia N. Gibson, Renate Chancellor, Nicole A. Cooke, Sarah Park Dahlen, Beth Patin, and Yasmeen Shorish, "Struggling to Breathe: COVID-19, Protest, and the LIS Response," *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*, preprint, July 11, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.17615/yhe2-8w37>.
13. Descriptions of and information about submitting manuscripts for *portal*'s three features—"Global Perspectives," "Reports from the Field," and "Worth Noting"—can be found at <https://www.press.jhu.edu/journals/portal-libraries-and-academy/author-guidelines>.
14. Johns Hopkins University Press, <https://www.press.jhu.edu/>.
15. *portal*'s "Author Guidelines" can be found at <https://www.press.jhu.edu/journals/portal-libraries-and-academy/author-guidelines>.

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