

Editorial

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The *Annales*, Today and Tomorrow

What is a scholarly journal today? This is the question we posed in the editorial of the first issue of 2011 on the evolution of the *Annales*. In a period marked by debate on the crisis of the historical and social sciences, the time has come to answer that question. This debate, which has been fueled by the economic, political, and institutional difficulties affecting our disciplines over the last few years, should not overshadow the remarkable innovations that have recently occurred in the field of history and the social sciences. The past twenty years have seen a re-articulation of knowledge and practice: investigations emerging from post-modernism and the cultural turn in the human sciences have been largely digested; new methods of analyzing action and data have been incorporated, contributing to the renewal of economic and social history; the relation between the temporality of historical action and that of historical writing is being considered; the critique of sources has been transformed alongside the development of important exchanges between the various social sciences as well as philosophy and literature; and renewed investigations into the epistemology of history have been conducted, emphasizing a new complementarity between case studies and generalization. These vast inquiries demonstrate that the “crisis of history” has to a great extent been surmounted. This means that the very real disintegration of the space of scholarly research, as it has been defined since the major intellectual and

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institutional changes of the late 1960s, must be grasped in all its complexity rather than feed a certain nostalgia for a golden age. Each generation of scholars has surely experienced crises, and the one affecting us today is undoubtedly less tragic than others. However, this particular crisis does seem to be distinct from those that preceded it: in addition to the political, economic, and intellectual issues at hand, the technological tools for conducting research and disseminating information are also changing profoundly. The digital revolution has transformed how we practice the social sciences, from the everyday use of laptops and e-mail to online publishing and widespread access to past publications through the digitization of books and journals. Researchers must take stock of these technical changes, just as they need to come to grips with the intellectual and institutional displacements that have occurred over the last decades. During this period, historians and, more widely, social scientists have worked consistently to redesign their questionnaires and methods in order to obtain new empirical results. And yet, the more technical changes have to a large extent been proclaimed rather discretely because scholars have, for good reasons, been careful to avoid the excesses of programmatic declarations and, perhaps as well, because public interest in the social sciences is less intense than in the past. Nonetheless, a new phase of historiography is being written, and, to the extent that the *Annales* has directly contributed to this transformation and will continue to do so in the future, it must be acknowledged in these pages.

How will we achieve this? Indeed, it is important not to separate the journal's intellectual ambition from its material form. Given that our journal is produced as a discrete object—with an intellectual coherence reflected in its material unity as a series of issues made up of thematic dossiers, essays, and reviews—, our primary concern is to continue distributing the print version in French as widely as possible. Unfortunately, however, academic journals have not been spared the broader trend of a decline in paper publications due to their cost and distribution. This is why the *Annales*, like other journals, has chosen to offer considerable free access to past issues with a moving wall in addition to paid electronic subscriptions. Our aim is to elaborate a sound financial model that respects the budget granted by the public institutions that support us. For this reason, we have avoided the two other models used by academic journals: either a completely free online journal or distribution by a commercial publisher, which heavily penalizes public investment in research because it makes academic institutions pay for access to work produced by their own faculty.

The difficulty lies in combining the online and the paper editions as well as finding a proper balance between them. On the one hand, the print edition plays a fundamental role in the journal's identity, creating a bond with a community of Francophone students and researchers. On the other hand, online publication presents a unique opportunity to extend our international readership. Since its creation, the *Annales* has set its horizons beyond the boundaries of France and Francophone countries, and the fact that today the balance between the journal's readership in France and overseas has kept pace with the ever-growing production of social scientific work across the globe attests to the success of this commitment.

In an effort to invigorate this mission, we have internationalized our editorial team and deeply considered the question of the languages of publication. While continuing to publish the print edition entirely in French, we have decided to create a bilingual edition of the articles in our journal, which is available online. For the moment, the book reviews, which are an essential part of the journal's activities, will remain exclusively in the French edition both in print and online, thus conserving their singularity. These reviews, thanks to our new website and to their integration onto the platform of the European project *recensio.net*, will be even more widely distributed, allowing them to find their place within an international scholarly debate. Many factors have contributed to the launch of this ambitious project: the support of the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique, the Florence Gould Foundation, the American University of Paris, and, we hope, other institutions; the addition to our editorial team of an American academic and an American editorial assistant coordinating a team of translators; and the efforts of the entire editorial staff at the *Annales*. The technical difficulties of a bilingual edition, using two different style manuals and striving for the same quality of scholarly language in English as in French, are quite real. The political risks are equally great in a country like France, where protecting the French language and its practice has been a priority. Nonetheless, we remain convinced that the project is worth undertaking.

Our choice is not only a matter of editorial adaptation. It is also, like the new structure presented here, a decision grounded in an intellectual commitment to developing historiographical exchanges anchored in the heritage of the *Annales* through new tools. A bilingual edition will provide Francophone scholars with the opportunity to continue writing and publishing in their own language while at the same time addressing an international readership in English. It will also undoubtedly attract more researchers writing in English and allow them to reach different audiences. The internationalization of research is not a question of fashion: outside the United States and Europe, the relative neglect of the historiographical dynamism of countries such as India, China, Russia, and Japan, in addition to those of Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa is as remarkable as it is problematic. In such a context, whether it is a matter to celebrate or deplore, French no longer plays a prominent role, and English has become the *lingua franca*. For these reasons, a bilingual edition in French and English would appear to offer the best means of remaining faithful to the international ambitions of the *Annales*, expanding the diffusion of our historiographical project without sacrificing our identity, and assuring the future as well as the intellectual and economic basis of our journal as an outlet for leading international scholarship in history and the social sciences.

The development of a new distribution policy also implies the creation of a website—now an indispensable scholarly tool—dedicated to the journal. The idea is to provide an editorial space that complements the issues and guides the reader. This site will now make it possible not only to follow the latest updates to the journal, but also to discover its heritage, through links to back issues that make this information more accessible via keyword or theme-based searches. This site

should also allow for the development of new ways of reading and publishing articles by referring the reader to online appendices, texts, images or videos, thus enabling us to connect with readers in new ways. While it has always been possible to write editorials or publish responses, any exchange has until now been constrained by the traditional format of editorial interventions. We hope that our website will become a preferred platform for scholarly debate, with the possibility for responding more rapidly than the journal and with greater flexibility. It could, for example, provide a space for debates about published articles and reviews, comprising readers' contributions as well as responses from the authors themselves. In this sense, it would act as the digital continuation of the types of discussion at the very heart of scholarly life and indeed at the foundation of the work carried out by all academic journals.

To the bilingual edition of the journal and the website we add a third innovation: the organization, supported by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, of regular public debates devoted to specific issues. The goal of our work at the *Annales* is to straddle the various communities working in history and the social sciences. The debates seek to reach out to high-school teachers, students, and a wider public curious to discover the latest research. Maintaining an ideal of public research that remains open to the world at large is yet another way to keep the journal's tradition alive.

What, then, is our objective? It is one that seeks to establish bridges between media, languages, current editorial work, and a rich historiographical heritage so that the journal might be used in new ways. Indeed, the online publication of the *Annales* divides the issues into a series of units—the articles—that need not necessarily relate back to the body of work in which they have been placed. Faced with this development, which dilutes the work of journals, a qualitative response is insufficient. The work of our editorial committee, supported by anonymous external expertise, remains, of course, necessary for a high-quality journal. But a journal is not a mere act of validation: it is an intellectual project that guarantees an identity, recognition, and value that transcends the simple material identification of a stack of paper. This does not mean that we should establish imperatives, launch new intellectual trends or defend a sectarian vision of historiography. More than anything else, we seek to put our principles to work: to publish texts that link the empirical work of the historical and social sciences to methodological propositions; to open the journal to a wider world of international scholarly production by enlarging its geographical and chronological horizons as much as possible; to pursue history as a social science inscribed within the multidisciplinary project of the human sciences; and to give scholarly research a reflexive and critical dimension, indispensable for avoiding the dual trap of positivism and relativism. For the *Annales* to continue as a journal, it must be a whole lot more. In place of a strong editorial and historiographical program, it must establish at once a practice, a process of writing, procedures, and an approach to debate and distribution. In short, it should aim to elaborate a *style*, in every sense of the term.