

EDITORS' NOTE

The challenges facing history journals

This letter is very different than others published in this journal. We wanted to provide the greatest visibility possible for an important text developed by and discussed as a collective editorial of the Forum of History Journal Editors of the National History Association (<https://anpuh.org.br/index.php/forum-de-editores-2>), entitled “Support for policies that recognize the importance of academic journals in the field of History.” It was written at the end of 2021 and has been published in most scientific journals in the discipline in Brazil. It highlights fundamental elements in defense of article publication processes and the work done by journal teams, who are not always properly recognized by institutions, by scientific associations or by the graduate programs to which they are linked, and even less so by the state and federal agencies that support research and teaching. The objective of this initiative is to stress the role of scientific periodicals in the circulation of knowledge that has been discussed and constructed based on archival evidence and interpretations, as well as call attention to the role of editorial teams (editors, the editorial board, peer reviewers, translators, copyeditors, secretaries, layout specialists, journalists and others). In the current environment in Brazil, recognition of our work has become fundamental to our ability to continue scientific publication activities. This work has been fiercely attacked, not only through precarious public funding for science, but also through the aggressive dismantling of Brazilian cultural and scientific institutions.

We invite our readers to read and ponder the joint editorial of the Fórum de Editores de Periódicos da Anpuh-Brasil (2022), transcribed below.

REFERENCES

Fórum de Editores de periódicos da Anpuh-Brasil. Por uma política de valorização das Revistas acadêmicas na área de História. *Zenodo*, 1 fev. 2022. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5940716>. Access on: Feb. 8 2022.

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Support for policies that recognize the importance of academic journals in the field of History

Over the last three decades, the place and role of articles published in scientific journals have grown significantly in the Humanities, whether due to changes in the universe of potential authors and readers arising from the expansion of undergraduate and graduate courses, or as a result of the emphasis on them in assessments performed by CAPES, the federal agency that evaluates graduate programs in Brazil. However, despite the growing number of published articles and journals (including student journals), we have not seen an equivalent expansion in the use of these references — in other articles, theses and dissertations and books — nor their presence in undergraduate and graduate course syllabi. We must ask: do we read and follow the articles published in journals, at least in our specialties?

The answer seems to be no, which may indicate a degree of distortion. Despite being a highly valued element in the evaluation of graduate programs, and involving a great deal of assessment and editing work by journal editorial teams, as well as the production and improvement of each article evaluated, they do not seem to be prominent in the daily lives of professors and researchers in the field of History. If we agree that articles should represent the first results of original research, shouldn't we, as a community, value them? We venture to say that two actions should be considered if we wish to change this situation: first, expansion in the uses of scientific articles during research, training, teaching and the preparation and selection of new researchers; in addition, full recognition of the work carried out by editorial teams (journal editors and evaluators/reviewers, in particular), in its technical and, above all, academic dimension.

It is a shared consensus that academic books are important as they represent the consolidation of original research, much of which has been accumulated over years. Journal articles, however, can have another function: to present new research, approaches, reviews of the historiographical field, reflections on teaching and its practice, etc., whose exploratory character is always welcome. It would be beneficial if some reflection on their formats existed in our educational institutions. But there is a large impediment to change in this direction: how can we, as a discipline, amplify the reading and use of published articles if, during the training of historians (at the undergraduate and graduate levels), the vast majority of references in course syllabi are books? And even mandatory texts value chapters much more than articles? Without training that prepares the community of historians to consult, use and reflect on this type of reference, including the multiplying number of digital tools that provide access to indexers and multi-journal databases, this situation is unlikely to change.

Observing what journals in the field have been doing recently, it is worth noting that we use very little of what they offer for reflection and teaching activities. Despite the traditional dossiers, debate sections, research reports, interviews, blogs, etc. – and more recently live interactions and online discussions that have progressively increased due to the pandemic that started in 2020 – almost none of this seems to be organic material for discussion on their topics and publications. Few degree programs promote reflection on and following of journals in specialized areas, within Brazil and abroad, and this could be especially significant in graduate courses, where the need to be up to date on new research on each topic is imperative, due to the fact that journals are vehicles of communication for the most recent research, in addition to being spaces for recurring interactions. And what can we say about programs that provide training activities related to editorial production at its various levels, even for evaluators, which also have very specific innovative experiences.

While this evidence suggests poor investment in academic debate, at the same time it invites the community of historians to reassess and improve its practices. None of this will make sense if we do not invest in valuing editorial work as a whole: the role of editors, boards, assistants and reviewers. This process involves at least two areas that are fundamental to strengthen informed debate in the field of history: (a) institutional recognition of the academic and technical work of those involved in the process of publishing a journal; and (b) recognition of the academic work involved in preparation of peer reviews of articles.

The work of the teams, at all levels, deserves institutional recognition that should perhaps have strong support within our own departments, programs, and universities, not to mention our evaluations as researchers and professors. Managing and carrying out journal activities requires long hours of voluntary work on behalf of the scientific discipline and, in most instances, is not even considered a professional activity by institutions – except for rare exceptions. The same can be said of the work done by students involved in the journal publishing process, who should receive credit for the hours spent on these activities if they are really understood to be central to their training. The editors must find the time, and deal with the work load (it is important to note that the smaller the journal, the more each person is responsible for), the difficulty in finding specialist peer reviewers willing and available to peer review our articles, the limited institutional technical support that forces them to learn about new tools for editorial management, checking for plagiarism, indexing and dissemination of our work, incessantly, all to ensure the publication of our articles, while maintaining the periodicity of the publication.

Unfortunately, the work of reviewers is not very different. In the vast majority of cases, we have a practically voluntary, anonymous activity, in which the demand for an individual's specialization and peer-review quality receives scarce recognition (a declaration of activities carried out, to be computed in departmental and/or program activity reports), which receives much less recognition that it should. It is no wonder that all journals have been having trouble finding willing peer reviewers, especially those with sufficient free time to spend on peer reviews. As long as we continue to fail to value the work of reviewers as highly qualified intellectual work, we will once again have little chance of improving the situation. This is even more true given the new challenges for journals, which are expected to be much more dynamic and active when interacting with the community, rather than simple repositories of texts.

We would go so far as to say that recognition of all these stages of production and evaluation could lead to a successful path away from productivism, in favor of a culture of more widespread reading of and interaction with journals. Changing the consolidated culture of the field when it comes to journals, and encouraging greater experimentation given the new possibilities available through digital platforms, is more than welcome now, but requires precious work hours from each of us.

While none of this is possible without trained human and technical resources, it is unfeasible without financial resources. Editing a quality journal requires financial resources to pay specialized teams – editing, translation, layout, support from secretaries and editorial assistants, XML markup, hosting of an editorial workflow management system, DOI registration, monitoring of indexing processing etc. The change from print to digital journals may have given rise to the illusion that costs have decreased. However, in general, costs have remained the same or grown as more specialized work has become imperative, as well as the need to create and maintain systems that not only ensure digital access in the short and long-term,

but also store and provide access to our work in the long term. After all, these archives provide evidence of a substantial part of our historiographical debates and, therefore, represent our memory. In this sense, financing the publication of a book is much easier than the complex editorial process behind each article published in an academic journal, whose demanding, continual and highly skilled work cannot be furtively slipped into teaching and research tasks.

In this regard, the demand for financial resources is extremely urgent, both at the national level and in our institutions and programs. This lack of resources had led to the discontinuation of several journals, not only small publications, but even academically acclaimed journals with the highest ranking in the national journal evaluation system. A hegemonic position within the discipline of history, and common in most of the Humanities, is that journals should not charge fees – neither from authors (usually referred to as an “article processing charge” or APC), nor from readers (subscription or access fees). Thus, and given that a majority of journals are linked to public Higher Education Institutions, the alternative to charging is to obtain funding through editorial program grants from funding agencies. Few of these funding agencies provide grants to new journals or to those which have not yet been widely indexed. In general, they have focused on periodicals indexed in large national and international databases. The alternatives are support foundations and resources from the Institution itself, though the calls for proposals to obtain these grants have become increasingly rare. Even so, these financing agencies rarely provide grants to this group.¹ This financial strangulation of the periodicals weakens research communities during their academic growth and consolidation process, in addition to reducing the plurality of research topics and, with this, the bibliodiversity of the discipline.

Given the serious national situation – neglect and flagrant reduction in financing for research – which elevates these complex circumstances to even more demanding current and future challenges, our political action is called upon to undertake a double task, which we can only accomplish if we join together. The first is to fight for recognition and funding, continually! However, we must also remember how crucial it is to have a culture of research and education that values scientific journals in the discipline, both in terms of using them and in terms of the work to produce them.

Signed (list of signatures up to date as of February 1, 2022 – version 7):

Aldrin Castellucci – Editor-in-Chief of *Revista Mundos do Trabalho*

Alessander Kerber – Editor-in-Chief of *Revista Anos 90*

Alessandra Izabel de Carvalho – Editor of *Revista de História Regional*

Andréa Slemian – Editor of *Revista Brasileira de História (ANPUH)*

Ângela Meirelles de Oliveira – Editor of *Revista Tempos Históricos*

Artur Nogueira Santos e Costa – Editor of *Revista Em Tempo de Histórias*

Beatriz de Moraes Vieira, Fabiano Vilaça, Lucia Bastos Pereira das Neves, Marina Monteiro Machado, and Tânia Bessone – Editors of *Revista Maracanan (UERJ)*

Breno Arsioli Moura, Ermelinda Moutinho Pataca, Indianara Lima Silva, and Rômulo de Paula Andrade – Editors of *Revista Brasileira de História da Ciência*

Camila Condilo – Editor-in-chief of *Revista Mundo Antigo em Resenha*

¹ Note that funding problems have been widespread, as remarked upon by the Brazilian Academy of Sciences (SITUAÇÃO DOS PERIÓDICOS CIENTÍFICOS..., 2021).

Carolina Amaral de Aguiar, Lukas Gabriel Grzybowski, Caio Pedrosa da Silva, Mariana Oliveira Arantes, and Dora Shellard Correa – Editors of *Revista Antíteses*
 Cláudia Maria das Graças Chaves – Editor of *Revista Almanack*
 Claudia Rodrigues – Editor of *Revista M. Estudos sobre a morte, os mortos e o morrer*
 (UNIRIO)

Dalila Varela Singulane and Carolina Saporetti – Editors of *Revista Discente Faces de Clio (UFJF)*

Eduardo Henrique Barbosa de Vasconcelos – Editor of *Revista de História da UEG/Quirinópolis* – Goiás

Erinaldo Cavalcanti and Geovanni Gomes Cabral, Marcus Reis – Editors of *Revista Escritas do Tempo* (Unifesspa)

Ester Liberato Pereira – Editor-in-chief of *Revista Caminhos da História*
 Flávia Florentino Varela – Editor-in-chief of the journal *História da Historiografia*
 Frank Antonio Mezzomo – Editor of *Revista NUPEM* (Unespar)

Gilberto da Silva Francisco and Glaydson José da Silva – Editors of *Revista Heródoto*
 (UNIFESP)

Gustavo Junqueira Duarte Oliveira and Uiran Gebara da Silva – Editors of *Revista Mare Nostrum* (USP)

João Maia, Thaís Blank, and Bernardo Buarque de Holanda – Editors of *Estudos Históricos*

Josianne Francia Cerasoli – Editor of the journal *Urbana, Revista Manduarisawa*
 Juniele Rabêlo de Almeida, Marina Annie Martine Berthet Ribeiro, and Ynaê Lopes dos Santos – Editors of *Revista Tempo* (UFF)

Karina Anhezini – Editor-in-chief of *Revista História* (São Paulo) (UNESP)

Luiz Antonio Dias – Scientific Editor of *Revista Projeto História*
 Luiz César de Sá – Editor of *Revista História, Histórias*
 Marcelo Cheche Galves – Editor of *Revista Outros Tempos* (UEMA)

Marcos Cueto (Scientific Editor), Roberta Cardoso Cerqueira (Executive Editor) – *História, Ciências, Saúde – Manguinhos*

Marcos Eduardo de Sousa – Editorial Assistant of the *ANPUH-Brazil Editors Forum*
 Miriam Dolhnikoff – Editor of *Revista de História* (USP)

Monica Martins da Silva – Editor of *Revista História Hoje* (ANPUH-Brazil)

Odilon Caldeira Neto and Leandro Pereira Gonçalves – Editors of *Revista Locus*
 (UFJF)

Ronald Lopes de Oliveira – Editor of *Revista Dia-logos* of Rio de Janeiro State University (UERJ)

Rita de Cássia Mendes Pereira, Grayce Mayre Bonfim Souza, and Ricardo Alexandre Santos de Sousa – Editors of *Revista Politeia: História e Sociedade* (UESB)

Samira Peruchi Moretto – Editor of *Fronteiras: Revista Catarinense de História* (UFFS, ANPUH-SC)

Sandro Dutra e Silva – Editor of *HALAC*
 Silvia Liebel – Editor of *Varia Historia* (UFMG)

Silvia Maria Fávero Arend, Maria Teresa Santos Cunha, and Reinaldo Lindolfo Lohn – Editors of *Revista Tempo e Argumento* (UDESC)

Stella Maris Scatena Franco – Editor-in-chief of *Revista Eletrônica da Anphlac*
Ulisses do Valle – Editor of *Revista de Teoria da História* (UFG)
Valéria dos Santos Guimarães and Adrielli Souza Costa – Editors of the journal
História e Cultura (UNESP)
Veronica Aparecida Silveira Aguiar – Editor of *Revista Labirinto* (UNIR)

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