Preface

The defining characteristic of a journal is constant change within a framework of stability. The stability is the most obvious part: same title, same numbering sequence of volumes, same format (for the most part), same editors, same location in the library, on your bookshelf, or online. The change is no less apparent, for if the content were not constantly updated, always shifting along with the academic conversation, what would be the point of a periodical? The discreet charm of a journal is that although the cover and title are identical, the contents are always a surprise. The secret to running one is managing the exciting change within the necessary stability.

*Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences* is no different. There have been large changes over the forty-three volumes of the journal, moving from the imposing format of Russell McCormmach’s initial journal to its trimness under the helm of John Heilbron for decades. The title metamorphosed—from *Physical Sciences* to *Physical and Biological Sciences* to its current *Natural Sciences*—and along came expanded scope and coverage. These kinds of changes are visibly announced, and the editors write and explain them, as the editors of this journal did with the relaunch of *HSNS* in volume 38, over six years ago.

There have also been many silent changes in the stabilizing framework, as is necessary for any healthy journal. Two years ago we moved from four issues a year—itself an innovation in volume 38—to five, enabling us to accommodate more of the excellent submissions we keep receiving. We are available on J-STOR. The essay-review format for book reviews has continued apace, with some slight experimentation around the edges, although the editors have rotated: Angela Creager and myself have ceded to the able control of Jacob Darwin Hamblin and Erika Lorraine Milam. The Associate Editors have experienced an organic turnover, with some historians rotating off to explore other scholarly ventures, while new scholars have joined, allowing us to adapt to the research fields of our contributors and renew the energy of this essential group of collaborators. Even the Editorial Board has changed, with David Kaiser and myself joining the group. One thing that has not changed is the...
collegiality and collaborative nature of the HSNS reviewing and refereeing process, which the Associate Editors manage alongside the Editorial Board, and that remains one of the distinctive qualities of this journal.

The secret, as noted above, is keeping the stability going so that the change can stand out. (No one reads journals for the reassuring regularity of the masthead and title.) For over six years, Cathryn Carson has accomplished the seemingly impossible: making HSNS a vibrant part of the scholarly conversation in our discipline by building on the framework of its parent journal while constructing an innovative cooperative editorial structure. She has now decided that there must be change for the stability to continue. With this issue I assume the responsibilities of chair of the Editorial Board. She will remain a keystone member of that latter group, and my goal is to continue precisely as she has relaunched us—producing a reliably unpredictable venue for scholarship in the history of all the natural sciences in the modern period.

Sincerely,
Michael D. Gordin