Throughout 2020 we have been celebrating fifty years of the *Bulletin for the Study of Religion*. While continuing to provide you with new content that showcases the theories, methods, business, and conversations that animate the international field, we’ve also given you a glimpse into our archives. Our editorial team selected some of their favorite pieces from the 70s, 80s, 90s, and 00s (Is this last one “the aughts”? Did we ever come to a consensus on how to pronounce this one?). I’ve also had the pleasure of sharing some of my own reflections on the history of the *Bulletin* and its predecessors—the *Council on the Study of Religion Bulletin* (CSR Bulletin) and the *Council for the Societies for the Study of Religion Bulletin* (the CSSR Bulletin).

While we have had a wonderful time doing this, I have a confession to make. The *Bulletin* in its various forms indeed comprise fifty volumes, but the first volume actually went to press in 1969. The difference in count is the result of the brief production pause and managerial transition in the mid-1990s that I discussed in my previous editorial. Maybe we should have commemorated fifty volumes instead—though you have to admit, it definitely lacks the panache of fifty years.

I think there’s something to be said for keeping with fifty years of the *Bulletin*. I gather I’m not alone in the struggle of keeping track of what all has happened in these last two pandemic years—a timeline that coincides with my editorship of the *Bulletin*. Additionally, if there’s anything I have learned from this retrospective, it’s that history is how community’s make up for what they perceive to be lost time. Whether we call it time well-spent (and worth subsequent trips down memory lane) or moments we fear may have been taken for granted (and thus, must be remembered), the impulse to make something of the past has become a time-honored tradition. And I can’t think of a better place to hold in tension the irony and seriousness of that dynamic than the *Bulletin*.

We know you’ve been looking forward to this much-anticipated final issue of the fiftieth volume, and we’re excited to deliver on this special look back over the past fifty-ish years. Our editorial team has been working with readers and contributors to come up with a sort of time-capsule of the *Bulletin*.

In this issue you’ll find five articles, selected from across the decades, that speak to the *Bulletin*’s ongoing commitment to facilitating work and growth in the field. We have also included some legacy inserts from the *Bulletin*’s history.

And speaking of legacy, some of our longtime readers will remember dispatches from the desk of Reed M. N. Weep and his graduate student Alumno Sinllanto. Weep was never at a loss for words (even when my predecessors gave him a strict word-limit). So wouldn’t you know, Sinllanto has shared with us a lost column of Weep’s.

Jeri Wieringa is back with our digital humanities feature, The Download, with a reprint of a 1984 essay by Robert A. Kraft that introduced many readers to the world of personal computing and its scholarly possibilities. Kraft, you’ll recall, went onto write the popular CSR Bulletin tech column, Offline. Wieringa and editorial assistant Emma Welch revisit this feature to discuss how the more things change, the more some things stay the same in the digital study of religion.

Finally, I’m pleased to share with you responses to two important works in the *Bulletin*’s history. Matthew Goff, Director of Graduate Studies at Florida State University, provides his take on Claude Welch’s *Graduate Education in Religion: A Critical Appraisal* (University of Montana Press, 1971). This book was commissioned by the CSR and was one of the earliest longitudinal examinations of graduate programs in
the North American field. And Matt Sheedy offers his thoughts on Reinventing Religious Studies: Key Writings in the History of a Discipline (Equinox 2013), an anthology of Bulletin pieces curated by former CSR Bulletin editor, Scott Elliot.

I have no doubt that the contributions of these scholars will remind you, as they have me, that the field is wide and that the Bulletin for the Study of Religion has played an important part in helping people navigate it. I am humbled and honored to add my name to a list of editors who have led colleagues and initiatives that have helped to bring the Bulletin to you for some fifty-odd years: Norman E. Wagner, Leonard J. Biallas, Richard P. Busse, Russell T. McCutcheon, Timothy Murphy, Craig Prentiss, Scott Elliot, Craig Martin, and Philip L. Tite.

With Gratitude and Anticipation,
Richard Newton

References