2020 is as auspicious a year as any to reflect on a vision for the Bulletin. One could tell many an origin story about the publication’s history—from its 1971 launch under the auspices of the Council of Societies for the Study of Religion (previously known as the Council on the Study of Religion) to its 2009 affiliation with the North American Association for the Study of Religion. But the long and short of it all is that for some fifty years the Bulletin has connected the proverbial dots between scholars’ work. In my mind, it has sought to bring into fruition what Eric J. Sharpe had “hoped for” toward the end of the second edition of his once well-known *Comparative Religion: A History* (a book I’ve used with MA students the past couple of years): “a transposition to the academic level of the dialogical approach to religion itself, in which subject specialists would share insights and compare findings to their mutual benefits” (1986, 298). Whether in the form of experimental essays, in-depth book reviews, or informative reports on society meetings, the Bulletin has brought the field together for timely examination of the work we have set out to do.

Beginning with this issue, the Bulletin’s history turns yet another page from its new institutional home, the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Alabama. As the faculty member who has taken on the role of editor I am looking forward to continued collaboration with Equinox Publishing to bring you a relaunched Bulletin, now a quarterly magazine for the international field. Each issue will highlight the sites where scholars of religion are at work doing the things that you should not only know about but also consider as you carry out your own scholarly, teaching, administrative, and professional duties. Moreover, with the help of graduate students from the department’s Religion in Culture master’s program working as editorial assistants, we want to showcase what you are engaged in and building when it comes to the study of religion. We don’t want you to just spread the word about the Bulletin. We want your hard work and good ideas to be featured in the Bulletin.

You’ll notice that we are modifying the Bulletin’s structure to further this vision. Ever find yourself missing an annual meeting and wishing for some color commentary on the proceedings? Check out The Conference. If you’re looking for ways to reinvigorate your home institution, get a load of what your colleagues are doing in The Department. You can get a look at the first of these columns in this issue, but be sure to stay tuned for what we have in store for other columns as we bring them into the rotation in future issues.

Going forward you can also expect some recurring features. In *The Field*, we sit down for a chat with those whose work online, offline, and out-of-line have impacted the way we conceptualize the academic study of religion. *The Profession* profiles a scholar of religion putting their academic training to good use in and even beyond the academy. Trying to keep up with all the happenings in digital religious studies? Alabama’s Jeri Wieringa will regularly bring you the latest with The Download. Sneak a peek at The Press to hear from journal and book editors who are building a home for your next publication. And finally, in The Question, Sage D’Vice has answers for everything you were afraid to ask. Each issue we are equipping you to do what you do best.

Not everything at the Bulletin is changing, however. In future issues, we will continue to publish experimental, non-peer reviewed articles. If you have a research idea that you want to take out for a spin, submit your piece to a section that we poignantly call The Essay. And because the more things change, the more they stay the same, we’ll be dusting off selections from our large set of back issues to display in The Archive. Did you read a new book or rediscover a classic? The Canon is the place to tell us why we need to know about it. Keep up with the Bulletin Blog for more details on calls and opportunities.

As this first issue goes to print, I cannot help but think that Sharpe was on to something in ending his history with a hope for a dialogical approach to the study of religion. What has become clearer to me since Sharpe’s day is that the spaces and conditions in which we carry out our work are as much a part of the field as the connections between our theoretical and methodological findings. It is on this that I hope a revamped *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* can put a finer point—for the good of the field.

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References