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Notes from the Editor

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Notes from the Editor

As *Great Plains Quarterly* begins the thirty-fourth year of publication, I want to call attention to five changes to the journal. First, we have a new Book Reviews Editor: Dr. Rebecca Buller, University of Nebraska–Lincoln. Dr. Buller has a background in historical geography of the Great Plains, with a specialization in Women's and Gender Studies. She takes the helm managing book reviews for *Great Plains Quarterly* as well as *Great Plains Research*. Dr. George Wolf continues his work with the journals as Review Essays Editor. Dr. Wolf's outstanding work as Book Reviews Editor began nineteen years ago. The superb selection of books and the quality of reviews are reflected in the fact that book reviews from *Great Plains Quarterly* are one of the most frequently downloaded selections on the University of Nebraska Digital Commons. *Great Plains Quarterly* would not be where it is today without the hard work and dedication of Dr. Wolf.

Second, we have added new members to the Editorial Board in an attempt to reflect the diversity of the disciplines that make up the authors and readers of *Great Plains Quarterly*. Additionally, both new and continuing members of the board have agreed to take an active role in determining the scope and direction of the journal. Our Editorial Board has always been made up of top scholars—our new board continues that tradition but will also be consulted on a regular basis regarding how *Great Plains Quarterly* can participate in and lead the conversations relevant to Plains scholarship.

Third, we are adding a new section of the journal devoted to raising important and even controversial questions related to scholarship and life on the Great Plains. These essays, position papers, and other narratives are intended to complement the peer-reviewed articles and speak to contemporary issues related to the Great Plains experience. I invited Dr. Lon Appleby from the School of Interdisciplinary Studies at Durham College (Ontario), to contribute the inaugural essay in this section. He addresses the proposed Keystone XL tar sands oil pipeline that may stretch from Alberta to Texas. Dr. Appleby's approach to this contro-

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versial topic is to present views from students around the world, including Nebraska, who participated in "global classroom" discussions about the role of oil production, use, and transportation in the twenty-first century.

A fourth change, and a benefit of our new publishing partnership with the University of Nebraska Press, is the inclusion of *Great Plains Quarterly* in Project Muse, a leading provider of digital humanities and social sciences content since 1995. This means the journal will now be available to a significantly larger audience than ever before, and it will increase the visibility and potential impact of our scholarship.

Finally, we are including in this issue a copy of what we see as the intellectual agenda of *Great Plains Quarterly*, which is intended to articulate the goals and mission of *Great Plains Quarterly* as we move forward. This mission statement is a work in progress, so any comments or suggestions are more than welcome. And all feedback is welcome regarding the present and future of *Great Plains Quarterly*.

Intellectual Agenda

What should an interdisciplinary regional journal like ours seek to accomplish? What should be the intellectual agenda of *Great Plains Quarterly*? I would like to suggest some answers from the perspective of my fourteen years as editor.

Looking back, I believe the best articles we've published have several elements in common. First, they provide an explicit answer to the question "so what?" Each explains in detail why the particular study contributes to a new understanding of the topic, and more importantly, makes a significant addition to the body of scholarship about the Great Plains in general. Although all essays we publish give us a reason to pay attention to their specific topics, the best make it abundantly clear why an understanding of their specifics adds to our overall appreciation and comprehension of general questions related to the Plains as a whole.

Second, many of the best ones give voice to unrepresented or underrepresented people of the Great Plains. These essays point out how past interpretations frequently gave short shrift to the views and words of indigenous and minority populations and attempt to rectify the situation by letting those voices be heard. And third, many of the best articles put new frames around old pictures—they take existing scholarship and give a fresh perspective on how to view the Great Plains in light of new theories and information. In doing so they provide challenges to existing theories, descriptions, and myths about the people, land, and culture of the region. *Great Plains Quarterly* should continue to publish work that incorporates these characteristics.

Given the challenges for scholarship in the twenty-first century, however, the journal establishes three additional goals for our future. First, we intend to make *Great Plains Quarterly* a leader in the conversation related to the past, present, and future of the Great Plains by publishing essays that lay out new agendas for research and teaching with the potential to create debate and discussion among multiple audiences. Second, we want to make it clear by our publishing choices that *Great Plains Quarterly* is an excellent platform for provocative and bold ideas, even controversial ideas, about the people, land, and culture of the region. And third, we intend to capitalize on new technologies for engaging our audience

of scholars and the educated public—to find the best ways to convey scholarly ideas to the people most in need of hearing what our authors have to say.

This agenda is not meant to provide a confining or restrictive template for *Great Plains Quarterly* authors. Rather, we hope to encourage authors to aim high and draw out the significance of their work, and we invite them and others to join this discussion of the future of this journal and of Plains scholarship in general.

Charles A. Braithwaite, Editor