

Osiris – a history of collaborative work and hidden labor

In 1985, *Osiris* was relaunched as “a research journal devoted to the history of science and its cultural influences.” Since its conception by George Sarton in 1936, *Osiris* has been always Isis’s younger sibling. Sarton’s fascination with Ancient Egyptian tradition reflected his and his generation’s investment in a linear story that explores and traces the origins of Western sciences from Ancient Egypt (as the pre-history) to ancient Greece to the Islamic “Middle Ages” and then to modernity through the Enlightenment and the scientific revolution. Isis, the Egyptian Goddess that became global, was a perfect symbol of this story. Osiris, the god who failed to become as internationally known, gave his name to the journal that Sarton considered to be the place of experimentation and reflection: “with hope and conviction that the history of science community needed to expand the range of its discourse, while remaining true to the standards of Isis.”

In a way, while Isis was to be the flagship journal that publishes cutting-edge research to the world, *Osiris* would take on the task of allowing historians of science to chart the future of the field or to talk to one another and about one another. The first volume after the relaunch was a perfect representation of this approach. Sally Gregory Kohlstedt and Margaret W. Rossiter edited the first volume in the journal’s new incarnation. The volume was centered around “historical writings on American science” and examined the histories of the great tradition. Kohlstedt and Rossiter are, of course, key figures in our contemporary understanding of the field. In 1989, that was not exactly the case. Kohlstedt had received her PhD from UIUC only 12 years earlier but had dedicated so much time and effort to HSS and the society’s Women’s Caucus. Rossiter had not secured a permanent position and had just extended her contract at Cornell. Originally, she was supposed to be there for two years, but Cornell agreed to extend her tenure for one more year. Rossiter had already won a Guggenheim fellowship and became a MacArthur Fellow in 1989. Yet, Cornell refused to hire her on a permanent basis until the University of Georgia tried to recruit her away from the Ivy. In a way, and despite their achievements, Kohlstedt and Rossiter edited the first volume in the new *Osiris* as part of their consistent service to the profession and while struggling to secure the recognition that they earned.

Today, *Osiris* stands to continue this mission: offering a space for a new and exciting look into the future of the field and a reflection on its past. In the same way that the journal’s first “new” editors pioneered the history of women in science, *Osiris* editors and volume editors worked to use the platform to enhance diversity and inclusion and to explore new and important methodological approaches. This mission, however, hides within its folds the hidden labor that makes *Osiris* possible.

First, as a journal dedicated to thematic volumes, *Osiris* produces perhaps the largest and most regularly edited volumes in the field. While many presses are understandably weary of edited volumes and the potential of disconnect, *Osiris* volume editors work to create workshops and spaces for authors to come together and think about new and important questions collectively and creatively. This is not an easy endeavor. It requires significant effort and dedication to be able to bring together a group of authors and to organize enough interactions to allow for a fruitful outcome. Editing is always a challenging task. Editing an *Osiris* volume is certainly more involved and deliberate than many other editing endeavors. In the same vein, this work is important because it highlights the importance of collective and collaborative work in an academic context that has grown increasingly individualized and competitive, especially with the dismal state of the job market.

At another level, *Osiris* volumes stand to offer a forward look into the future of the field. To serve as the field’s proverbial oracle or designated provocateur, the journal must embrace the risky and the adventurous, as well as the new and upcoming, in terms of both scholarship and scholars. Here again, *Osiris* editors and the volume guest editors need to put in additional time and effort to unleash the potential in the pieces the journal publishes, to insist on looking forward and pushing for new and exciting horizons. Authors, too, are asked to embrace the unfamiliar and to start a 3–4-year marathon to write a piece that chases an ever-moving future. The journal’s futuristic nature further highlights the importance of diversity. We would argue that *Osiris* has, as a key part of its

mandate, the need to include global and diverse perspectives. This is not only through moving beyond Euro-American centrism but also through actively pushing for a more inclusive and diverse field that is able to engage with an ever-evolving future.

As Osiris editors, we cannot imagine the journal without the dedicated work of our editorial assistant, Dr. Sonia Wigh, our copyeditor, Amy Sherman, and our proofreader, (enter full name here) along with the amazing team at Chicago University Press. Writing into the future is a tough task and it certainly takes a village.