



COMMENTARY

## 2022 Acknowledgements and Reflections

**James Houran**

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This year brought a whirlwind of learnings, so my warmest thanks to the SSE leadership and *JSE* editorial team for actively supporting my adjustment to the Editor-in-Chief role. I want to especially acknowledge the production efforts of our stalwart Managing Editor Kathleen Erickson, as well as the selfless and continuing mentorship from the prior editor Stephen Braude. Extremely helpful discussions and guidance also came from colleagues, including Garret Moddel, Julia Mossbridge, Brian Laythe, Mark Rodeghier, Daniel Sheehan, and Michael Sudduth. Their periodic calibrations were much needed and greatly appreciated.

Of course, tremendous gratitude goes to the Associate Editors for doing the heavy “thinking and lifting” of evaluating submissions and facilitating quality reviews on a deadline. The time and energy associated with their work can neither be overstated nor overappreciated. This excellent group of scientific advisors likewise challenges me in many ways that enhance my perspective and hopefully my performance — so bravo to Imants Barušs, Jeremy Drake, Àlex Escolà-Gascón, Hartmut Grote, Rense Lange, Brian Laythe, James G. Matlock, Julia Mossbridge, Roger Nelson, Mark Rodeghier, Paul Smith, Harald Walach, and N. C. Wickramasinghe.

We are also lucky to have recently added two new editorial team members. First, please meet Rachael Ironside, Ph.D., from Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, UK (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2513-0998>). Her research interests include social interaction, group experience, and the role of supernatural tourism and folklore in contemporary society. Dr. Ironside has experience in qualitative research methodologies, specializing in conversation analysis and the use of video to analyze social interaction. Next, we welcome back P. David Moncrief to the role of Book Review Editor (his previous stint was 2001 to 2014). There are some fresh elements coming to this section of the *Journal*, so stay tuned.

Finally, the editorial team extends its appreciation to the many experts who served as peer reviewers this year: James Arnette, Henry H. Bauer, William Bengston, Dick Bierman, Robert Bobrow, Mark Boccuzzi, Thomas E. Bullard, Mark J. Carlotto, Bernard Carr, Bruce Champagne, Jack Denur, Jeremy Drake, Brian Edwards, Àlex Escolà-Gascón, Sean Fitzgerald, Andrew Foss, Gary Goldstein, Dale Graff, Hartmut Grote, Bernard Haisch, Trevor Hamilton, Larry Hancock, Michele Hanks, George Hathaway, Richard Conn Henry, Louis Irwin, Deborah Lynne Katz, James Kennedy, Stan Koren, Stanley Krippner, John G. Kruth, Rense Lange, Brian Laythe, Phil Layton, James W. Lee, Cindy Little, Monika Mandoki, Everton Maraldi, James G. Matlock, James McClenon, Josh Mitteldorf, Garret Moddel, Margaret Moga, Julia Mossbridge, Ton Muller, Linda Murphy, Roger Nelson, Garry Nolan, Paul Nunez, Daqing Piao, Dean Radin, Adam J. Rock, Chris Roe, Chris Rutkowski, Malcolm Schofield, Daniel Sheehan, Lorraine Sheridan, Paul Smith, Kenneth Stevenson, Lance Storm, Massimo Teodorani, Diane Thompson, Chantal Toporow, Patrizio Tressol-

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di, Mark Urban-Lurain, Annalisa Ventola, Harald Walach, K. M. Wehrstein, Bryan J. Williams, George R. Williams, and Nancy Zingrone.

Some unpleasant editorial experiences also deserve comment. Namely, we received three general complaints about our recent content: (a) tolerating lengthy articles versus pushing for shorter papers, (b) allowing critiques of mainstream information about the origins or handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, and (c) showing a similar willingness to publish skeptical treatises of other hot-but-ton topics like climate change, i.e., anthropogenic global warming. Some detractors have characterized these latter issues as “editorial malfeasance” on Internet discussion groups and these misgivings even motivated a couple of readers to unsubscribe, and in one instance, to resign abruptly from the Editorial Board. My considered reply to these consequences is, “So be it, no regrets.” The editorial policy under my tenure is, unapologetically, to provide a platform for insights or information that confront “what science knows” and “how it knows it.”

There is at least some comfort in realizing that the former editor also had to deal with irritated authors and bouts of academic intolerance (e.g., Braude, 2010a, 2010b). On reflection, it could further be said that the *JSE* has been an equal-opportunity offender since its inception.

Those who object to certain content should engage in direct critique using counterarguments or evidence. This approach actually supports science rather than reinforces the fallacious social standard of ‘popular equals correct.’ Rigorous peer review, challenging the status quo, open debate, intellectual humility, and data-driven analysis and conclusions should not be troubling stances for any scientist (frontier or not) to take or defend. In fact, it would seem that these principles should define the shared moral compass and ethical tenets of all scholars. But the religion of ‘scientism’ with its ritual accusations of ‘denialism’ too often contaminates sociopolitical and educational institutions. To be clear, censoring serious

questions about data, its meanings, or potential implications is antithetical both to my stated agenda for the *Journal* and the scientific process more generally (for a discussion, see Houran, 2022). Individuals who thus believe in the dogma of “settled science” should certainly avoid the SSE’s membership, events, and publications—consider this as an advisory warning label. Nevertheless, we appreciate our readers’ good faith feedback and always strive to learn from constructive criticism.

Next year *JSE* will be every bit as provocative as it was in 2022, with two special issues underway: (a) *The Darker Side of Spirituality* (with Guest Editors: Malcolm Schofield, Carrie Childs, and Chris Howard) and (b) *The Shakespeare Authorship Question: Alternative Mappings* (with Guest Editor: Professor Don Rubin). Readers can also expect empirical and conceptual papers by noted researchers, some new faces, and even a few citizen scientists in the frontier realm. And there will not be a shortage of public debates and intellectual tensions on particularly controversial topics. All this and more happens only because of your SSE memberships, donations, and participation in SSE’s activities and periodicals. To be sure, one of the greatest joys of this holiday season is the opportunity for the *JSE* team to thank our wonderful readers and advocates and wish you the very best for the New Year — your ongoing interest and encouragement make all the difference.



## REFERENCES

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