



A New Era for the JNL

Sharp-eyed readers may notice that this issue of the JNL looks a little different. This is the first issue we have put out in collaboration with our new publishing partner, Northwestern University Libraries (NUL).

When I took over as editor of the JNL about two years ago, I transitioned the publication to a digital format and set up a WordPress website for our archive. I have been adding new issues to this website as we produce them. This seemed an adequate approach for the short term. My top priorities were to reduce production expenses and keep the JNL going. However, I knew from the outset that I also wanted to look into a possible publishing partnership for the future.

In the Fall of 2025, I met with about a dozen academics who edit niche scholarly publications that are more or less analogous to the JNL and talked with them about how they produce and publish issues. After considering many possibilities, I decided that the best overall option for the JNL would be to partner with Northwestern University Libraries (NUL), which recently began publishing open access scholarly journals on its website. (I should clarify that we have entered into a partnership with Northwestern University Libraries, not Northwestern University Press.)

NUL began hosting and publishing journals recently, in large part because the cost of periodicals has been rising sharply in recent years. University libraries now spend millions of dollars each year to get access to journals that are bundled and sold by corporate publishers. The cost of periodicals has risen so sharply that university libraries have started to set up alternative avenues for academic publishing.

NUL offers web hosting and publishing for scholarly journals, but only for open-access journals edited by scholars associated with Northwestern. The JNL had already gone to an open access format, and I have been teaching at Northwestern recently, so the JNL met both basic requirements. We decided to sign on with NUL in the Spring of 2026.

I believe this partnership will be useful for the JNL in several ways.

- NUL will set up a new archive for the JNL, which will eventually replace the current archive. The old archive was fragile: it could have popped out of existence at any moment if I stepped out in front of a car or failed to pay renewal fees. The new archive will offer much better prospects for stability and longevity.
- NUL will begin assigning DOI identifier numbers to JNL content, which will make it easier to locate issues and articles on the web. The current plan is to assign one DOI *per issue* for the early issues of the JNL (which are mostly “narrated” by a single voice, like an old-fashioned evening news broadcast) and one DOI *per article* for articles published after the format change that took place when Stuart Sherman began editing the JNL in 1990.
- Going forward, NUL will ensure that JNL articles are added to various indices and bibliographic databases. As a result, it should be significantly easier for scholars to find notes and articles published in the JNL.
- The JNL will once again enjoy an affiliation with a prestigious American university. (At various times in the past, it has been affiliated with Columbia University, the University of Chicago, and Vassar College.)
- The JNL will be brought into alignment with publishing standards for open access journals. For example, we are making adjustments to the way images are presented, formatted, and captioned to ensure that image descriptions are available for disabled readers.

What won’t change is the editorial focus of the journal. We will continue to focus on Johnson, the writers he read, the people he interacted with, and the writers who have written about him.



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