

An Oral History of the *Popular Culture Studies Journal*



How It All Began

Gary Burns: Midwest PCA/ACA having a journal is something that I hoped would happen, but I never got around to it. It was always part of what I thought we should be doing. It's kind of surprising, in retrospect, since MPCA started in 1973, making it one of the older regional organizations. And it was always viewed as one of the stronger ones, partly because it encompasses Bowling Green State University, Michigan State, and the Big Ten universities. But, as far as I know, there was not a MPCA journal until *Popular Culture Studies Journal* came out. Shortly after I stepped out of the Executive Secretary positions, others took on that task, and I'm glad they did. I was surprised it happened to fast.

Lori Abels Scharenbroich: Gary Burns wanted a journal to go with the MPCA/ACA relaunch. But those conversations really didn't start – at least as far as I know – until we probably had three or four years under our belt. Then he started getting serious about what that could be, what it could look like. Anthony Adah was one of the originals in that discussion and was very passionate about it.

Paul Booth: I remember that we talked about doing a journal, but it felt like one of those conversations that we just always had at every meeting – and, yes, we should do that. It may be that both the Executive Council and Bob Batchelor had the idea simultaneously. Just a hallway conversation that becomes something more. That's how these sorts of things happen. The idea of people just being able to come up with ideas and bringing them to the Execs and having those ideas realized. It's one of the things I love about this conference; it's almost entirely generated bottom-up.

Kathleen Turner Ledgerwood: Around 2009 at a business meeting for members of MPCA/ACA, someone asked about starting a journal for the organization. At this point, a small taskforce was put together to look into and discuss the issue, and I was a member of this original taskforce. At this point, we started discussions about building an editorial board and how we might start and manage a journal.

Angela Spence Nelson: Starting around 2010 there was a discussion about a journal, and it being online as opposed to being in print. Partly because we were thinking about the expenses at the time. I don't remember a lot of conversation about starting a journal when I was MPCA President, but I felt it was a good idea, and I think most people felt that. Especially for it to be online and to not try to do anything print. I thought it was exciting. I mean, it seemed that the MPCA/ACA needed a journal, but perhaps one reason it didn't was because of the association's close relationship with Ray Browne and Bowling Green State University. I feel when you have a professional association with scholarly meetings, then there should be some scholarly publication, whether in print or online, that is tied to it.

Cortney Barko: Even before I was Vice-President of MPCA I was hearing talk about a journal. It was exciting! I mean, it was a hopeful thing for a lot of people, and it was great seeing that the association was expanding in a way to include a journal. I remember a lot of people who were really glad to see that we were going in that direction. With it being part of the association, we were already invested in it being a success. We already knew something about it because we knew the people involved with it. So, the journal was seen as being a part of the MPCA team. When I was on the Executive Council, I remember we would talk about it in the meetings, and even though I wasn't directly involved with the journal, I felt like I was invested in it by being a part of the association. I was invested in it being successful, even if I wasn't directly involved.

Anthony Adah: At a general MPCA business meeting, we were talking about membership numbers going down, so I suggested that one thing the association could do is open up a little bit to graduate students. I said if you are going to bring

in graduate students, maybe offer them an opportunity to publish with an in-house journal. With saying that, I learned that the association had been discussing a journal for years. I also was elected an At-Large Member and took on the responsibility of developing a journal. I took the idea to Intellect Books, who used to have a strong presence at the conference and was put in contact with one of their editors, James Cameron. The conversation took a while, with emails that went unanswered for long times due to their traveling to conferences. Eventually he suggested that for us to start a journal with Intellect Books, we would have to begin with a current journal they publish as a trial run before we could have our own title. We would have had to propose three special issues to demonstrate what the journal would be like. This process would have taken over three years. After which time, they would decide whether or not to take us on. So, it would have been more like a traditional journal, with a printed copy and everything.

Kathleen Turner Ledgerwood: By 2012, we had made little headway on determining how to best start a journal from within the organization. Brendan Riley, the Executive Secretary at the time, asked Bob Batchelor if he would spearhead the effort as the journal's editor. Thankfully, Bob agreed to get the journal started.

Lori Abels Scharenboich: And then Bob Batchelor walked in – that was in Milwaukee in 2010, I think, that we met him for the first time. He was very interested in a journal and getting one off the ground. So, we brought him into the organization, and he had Norma Jones with him. She knew how to do all that, because by then Gary had stepped back from being Executive Secretary. Once Bob got a hold of it and really ran with it, that's when it got off the ground. It took a few years, but he really helped lay and establish the groundwork for what the journal would become.

Bob Batchelor: The idea of starting a journal had been kicking around for a while, even before I had joined MPCA. Brendan was Executive Director and Paul was president if I'm not mistaken. Paul may have been VP. There was a lot of enthusiasm, because we felt that the MPCA was Ray Browne's homebase and that we had to attempt to fill his shoes. The leaders at that time knew I had a lot of experience in publishing, and I was searching for a big project to help out the organization. I had been one of the featured speakers at the Milwaukee MPCA meeting and really liked everyone (some I knew from PCA), so I got active quickly. The board set up a committee to look into setting up a journal but gave me a lot of leeway in pursuing the idea. I was on the Editorial Board for the *Journal of Popular Culture* (JPC), so I had that experience too and had spent a lot of time talking to Gary Hoppenstand and Kathy Merlock Jackson about their experiences. Gary

Burns was an unofficial advisor too since he had so much experience running MPCA and with journal publishing.

Malynnda Johnson: I was at the table when they first started talking about a journal and if we should even do one. All of us were like, yes, absolutely. We talked about what it would look like, how we would put it together, how to handle submissions. It did kind of venture into a smaller group of people who had known each other long. They just had established history, and I was kind of the new kid going in. I thought it was a great idea, and I kind of felt a little bit like a puppy. I was like yes, this is a great idea, I want to help; I don't know how to help, but I'm here to do the things; whatever you need to do, I'm happy to do it. So, for me, it was a lot of just sitting back, listening, learning how one starts a journal. It was a learning experience of how does this work, what are all the components you have to think about? I don't think I contributed a whole lot to those early conversations, but I was willing and happy to help when I could. I thought it was a really great idea and a great opportunity for us to celebrate that scholarship.

Kathleen Turner Ledgerwood: Bob started by turning our committee into an Editorial Advisory Board, and by bringing in a few new names to this board. He met with several publishers who at the time would only take on an organization's academic journal if we agreed to publish six to eight issues a year. As Bob reached out to the editorial board, he thought this would be too big of an undertaking, and he suggested an open-access journal that MPCA/ACA would publish itself on our website. We agreed as a board that this seemed like the most reasonable option for an organization of our size, and so we turned to brainstorming names for the journal. We came up with several variations of possible titles using the words "popular culture" and finally decided on the *Popular Culture Studies Journal* in the early part of 2012.

A Vision for a Journal

Gary Burns: I was still thinking of a journal as a print publication, which would have been a big deal to set up, and a financial risk in some ways. It never would have occurred to me to do it as an online journal. Or, if it had occurred to me, I probably would have said we cannot do that and we need to have a print version. So, I think that's part of the reason it didn't happen sooner. Thankfully the people who actually ended up doing it didn't have the same hang-ups I do.

Angela Spence Nelson: I remember we had good conversations about the scope of the journal, and I realized that we were doing something different, something new. That's what I liked about it.

Andrew Herrmann: It was born out of frustration we had. Bob and I had this running joke at the time that we were all publishing in the *International Journal of Two Readers*: one was the author, and one was the reviewer, and that was it. Everything else was behind a paywall. There was a bunch of us who had this little running joke, and it was borne out of frustration on the price of journals; like, sometimes you must pay thirty-five dollars for your own piece.

Bob Batchelor: I thought we would go the traditional route of finding a journal publisher to put out a paper-based journal. I spoke to many, many companies, and it seemed we were moving fast with Intellect, though there were tons of paperwork and hoops to jump through. I don't remember the spark, but I recall thinking, "why don't we just publish this ourselves?" We had all the professional experience with publishing and – at that time – people were about 50/50 on being "cutting edge" by doing it online/free versus the so-called "prestige" of publishing traditionally. My ideal/model journal was the *Mailer Review*, published by University of South Florida and edited by my mentor Phillip Sipiora, who I also used as a sounding board and advisor.

I am not an "in the weeds" thinker, so I got a bunch of people who I knew I could count on to help me launch the first issue. Norma Jones was the first "draftee." She is super smart and knows how to keep the wheels turning. My goal was to publish one big "annual" type journal just to get it done fast – also thinking that a (virtually) thick journal would catch people's attention. The Editorial Board was basically scholars I knew from a number of disciplines, most with some connection to MCPA, but our goal was always to have a broader direction. I wanted to create a journal that would be as good as JPC but free to anyone who was interested enough to download the PDF. Brent Jones created our covers, which I thought were fantastic. He and Norma crafted them and made PCSJ really stick out versus most boring covers on most journals. They were so much more attractive than traditional journals that didn't have the budgets to create something good – yet another reason to do this electronically. See, for example, Issue 3 with "The Thinker" holding a selfie stick. This still resonates today (maybe even more than 2015) and is just wonderful.

We felt like renegades to some degree...kind of just doing what we always wanted to see in journals, particularly in making them potentially engaging for general

readers. For example, adding a feature interview with a big-time scholar, like Arthur Asa Berger or George Cheney...the kind of scholar who wasn't a PCA member but had made huge contributions to popular culture and/or scholarship.

Norma Jones: He wanted to be better. A journal that is open access and represents popular culture in terms of democracy and democratic principles. He also wanted it to look the part. I'm really lucky to have Brent as a creative helping us. Brent and I both have experience with getting things done quickly for productions. So, we kept in touch with Bob to create his vision. Actually, Bob mentioned that one of his biggest concerns was the production side, and luckily, we had the in-house talent/expertise to pull it off. Both Brent and I have been involved with professional productions. Between the two of us, we have maybe two to three decades of experience in interpreting what clients want and delivering in print or other media. I think in some ways we were different was in terms of look and feel. But isn't that the point of popular culture? To break down traditional boundaries? I love our speed and vibe. I wonder how we might inform how other journals could be leaner and faster.

Jennifer Dunn: Bob submitted a chapter for the first book I ever published, an edited volume on *Mad Men*. The book was published in 2012, and around then I went to my first MPCA where Bob was doing a publishing session. He started talking about his anti-journal journal on this panel with journal editors, talking about why his journal would be a great place for the future of publication. We then got to chatting afterward, and the next thing I knew I was getting a request to be the Reviews Editor for the journal. I wasn't the Reviews Editor for the first volume, but I was for the second volume, when the reviews became fifty pages of the journal.

By "anti-journal journal" – I mean, I don't remember if Bob or Norma used that term exactly – it was the idea that people did not have a paywall between themselves and the publication. There wasn't the same rigamarole. The JPC had a two-year backlog on publishing articles then. Bob wanted to make sure a peer-review process happened, but he wanted it to be more cooperative. There was this attitude of being inclusive. Bob was kind of anti the established popular culture journals, their bureaucracy and backlog, and some of the barriers to publishing that aren't official but just happen in that world.

Anthony Adah: I thought the idea of an online, open access journal was great. When the committee to look into a journal started, that's what we were hoping for. I thought it made things a little faster and that the reviewing process was probably

less expensive. The idea also makes the journal more useful for undergraduate and graduate students as both users and contributors. I think people also feel that it is somewhat more democratizing. There is a tendency to think of traditional journals as a little stuffy, even if they have quick turnaround time.

Malynnda Johnson: It being online probably started with the financial consideration. Let's try this out for a little bit, see how it goes, and then decide if we want to work with a bigger publisher. We initially decided to go online because publishing a physical copy is extremely expensive. Then that sparked some conversations of what are additional benefits to just having it online and open access? Rather than deal with who is going to publish this, what is it going to look like and so forth, we could just host it online and then we don't have to deal with some of those considerations.

Cortney Barko: It was a new thing, and it was a chance for us to potentially submit and have our research published in a journal where we didn't feel alienated from. We could have a chance to submit our work to a journal we understood. A lot of times when popular culture scholars, experts in our fields, submit to journals, we think we have something great. Then the journal kicks it back to us and says something impersonal, very cold, even unfriendly. But part of MPCA's culture is being a welcoming organization, and I feel like the journal is a very welcoming journal. It's great to have that welcoming, open feeling associated with the journal just like it is with the association.

Malynnda Johnson: The main idea was we wanted it to be accessible for young scholars. We wanted it to be accessible for anybody. We wanted a way that we can share this with everybody, no matter if they're part of a university that has a library, whether they're a part of a graduate school, or if they're trying to figure this stuff out on their own. Let's give everybody the opportunity to contribute and foster the type of community that we want to have.

Paul Booth: When this started, I was a pre-tenure, assistant professor then who was stressed about getting tenure and needing to publish in good, peer-reviewed journals to get my name out there. So, at the time, it wasn't a venue that I saw as something that I could publish in that would be helpful. Now I'm a full professor with tenure, and I no longer need to worry about where I publish, so the idea of open access is so much more appealing to me because I want people to read my work. I don't want it to be locked behind a paywall. I want it to be out there. And I think my writing has changed to be more accessible, less jargony. But I do wonder if being open access is dependent on one's positionality within academia. As a

graduate student, I would have loved it because any sort of publication is great. You just want to get your name out there. I would have loved it to help me find sources for my dissertation. But as an assistant professor, I was cautious.

Volume 1, Numbers 1&2

Kathleen Turner Ledgerwood: I was elected to the position of Executive Director for MPCA/ACA at the conference in 2012 when Brendan Riley stepped down. I took over officially in January of 2013, and Bob and I immediately started talking more about how we could implement the first journal issue and what that might look like. Bob really wanted to have two issues a year but pulling together the first issue was going to be very time intensive. Bob first set up an Editorial Advisory Board with a robust list of accomplished scholars who were engaging in popular culture studies across a variety of disciplines. Then we had to put together and disseminate the first call for papers for the journal, review them, and put together that first issue. We aimed to complete the first issue in time for the October 2013 MPCA/ACA conference. As Bob and I corresponded over the summer months, it became clear that there were enough submissions for the first issue to put together a double issue. Bob brought so much publishing and editing experience with him, as well as a vast network of scholars that he had worked with over the years that he made getting submissions for the first issue effortless.

Bob Batchelor: I also recruited some scholars or urged them to submit. I got to know a group of up-and-coming scholars who were doing interesting work and started to pull them into MPCA and PCA. I always felt there should be more crossover, especially with NCA and its regional groups, since we were all doing similar work, but their's was considered more serious than ours. I felt we could help each other, and that the synergy had to come from individual member to individual member.

Andrew Herrmann: When Bob told me he was going to launch this journal, I said it's going to be a lot of work. He said, "well, I'm going to put together an editorial board; you want to be on it?" I said, sure, because I wouldn't not want to be on it. And then he emails me, "Oh, so I want you to write. I want you to write a piece for the first volume. I want you to take autoethnography and popular culture and just write about them." So, I did this little exploration of this alternative Christian New Wave punk band that I discovered when I was like fourteen years old, and how I had followed their trajectory all this time.

Jesse Kavadlo: I had co-edited a book with Bob, and so we were in touch. As I remember, he sent a message to some of the people he had collaborated with previously and said we're launching this issue, do you have anything that you are working on you could submit. I had something I had been working on that I was trying to find the right place for it. I thought this journal could be the right thing at the right moment. Then he asked me to be on the advisory committee, so I started doing some peer reviews. Being more involved with the journal means I get to see it all the way through. Seeing the final version of it, you feel a little more connected to it.

Kathleen Turner Ledgerwood: We still had a lot of work to do though as we put together our first issue. Bob emailed me in the early summer of 2012 saying that he brought on someone with "impeccable design skills." This designer was Norma Jones, whose husband Brent Jones did the graphic design work for our first five volumes. Really, Norma Jones as a graduate student was a big part of the driving force that pulled the first volume of the journal together. As Bob was driving to the 2013 conference in St. Louis, MO from Thiel University, Norma sent me the final journal volume to post on the website. Brian Ekdale, our webmaster, quickly created space for our first journal volume, and posted the journal to our website in time for the conference. We announced and happily handed out flyers and put up boards advertising our first volume at the 2013 conference. Many cliches spring to my mind as I think about that first journal being put together by volunteers and busy academics carving out time to make this a possibility. But I do know for certain that the first journal volume would not have been possible without Bob Batchelor and Norma Jones putting in so much time and effort to get the first volume ready to go and published.

Norma Jones: I first heard of MPCA while in my doctoral program at Kent State University. Bob Batchelor was my advisor and mentor. He told me about his vision for the journal and I was immediately interested in helping him make that vision a reality. My mother started one of the first Chinese/English magazines and cable channels in the U.S. I learned how to layout and create published works from hanging out in her offices. So, I asked Bob if I could draft a template for him, including a cover. The inside bits were fine, but my cover was horrible! It was a badly interpreted homage to Mondrian. I showed my husband/spouse/partner, Brent, and he pretty much took over covers from me. Bob liked it and added me on as an editor (I forgot the exact title). It reminded me a lot of helping Mom with her magazine or a production Brent or I run. Things come in, they need to go through

a process, then we need to figure out what goes out. We also need to be sure what goes out looks excellent.

Kathleen Turner Ledgerwood: The next year, I joined the journal as an Associate Editor, in addition to my role for MPCA/ACA as Executive Director. The first five volumes became double issues because putting together a new journal is so time-intensive, but we had a dedicated team of people to put these together.

Andrew Herrmann: When it was actually finished and up online, I think I read the journal in one sitting all the way through, which is kind of a rarity, right? Because you're not necessarily interested in all the topics that are in a journal. But here I'd gotten my eyeballs on a free popular culture academic journal. I read the whole issue in one night.

Angela Spence Nelson: I was impressed when the first issue came out. Bob was good, prolific. I was excited. I was glad that it was done, and I'm glad that it's still around after ten years. I suppose our viewpoints as academics and faculty members is to see the prestige of a university or academic press. But there's still a hierarchy, and some attitudes have to be adjusted. Of course, you never pull everybody in for everything at the same time.

Paul Booth: To be completely honest, I was unsure of its longevity. I didn't know if my reaction was this old academic holdover, but I didn't know if this kind of open access would have staying power. I thought it was a cool experiment that may or may not last. I'm happy to have been wrong. I'm happy that it has lasted, that there's really good work in it, and that it's doing new and interesting things. It's playing with form

Jesse Kavadlo: I'm in a good position being at Maryville University, which is not a Research I institution. I suspect that if I was at an R1 and had published an article in the first issue of a new journal that was online and open access, that it would not have counted for much. But my institution doesn't care about that. They just like that I got any publication, and I like the idea that this article probably reached way more viewers than something behind a paywall or only as a print copy. I'm all for as much open access as possible, and in some ways the people who are at R1s have a little bit of a disadvantage. I imagine that other people really do feel some pressure to publish with a high index score. But I want to reach as many people as possible, and luckily my institution is not an obstacle.

Cortney Barko: I think that first issue, and the ones that have come out since, have all been very representative of what MPCA is. MPCA is a very accessible

association, and what makes the journal accessible is it being open and online. That is very much in line with who we are as a group. The good work published in the journal is representative of the good work we see in our panels and presentations. The journal is a nice extension of the scholarship of the conference.

Malynnda Johnson: After a while, the conversations about going to a traditional publisher just went away, when we saw that there are actually a lot of benefits to publishing online and open access. We just decided to keep doing it that way.

Gary Burns: It's a golden age of journal publishing right now. If you want to get something published, and it meets a certain standard of quality, then you're going to be able to find someplace to publish it if you just keep at it. I think the proliferation of journals is so far a good thing. I don't think we've reached the point yet of information overload or saturation.

The Passing of Torches

Jennifer Dunn: Bob and Norma's anti-journal rhetoric set the stage for me. I took a page from their book that because we're publishing online and didn't have page restrictions, then I could be more open to what books we wanted to review. I started reaching out to various publications who had series related to popular culture. I introduced myself via email, gave them my mailing address, and said if you want us to review them, send them. At the conference I went to the publishers' tables to see what they were carrying and would reach out to them as well. With my name out there, people started reaching out to me and asking if they could send me books. My attitude was to include all different things. I was getting philosophy in popular culture, media studies, critical cultural research, intersectional. I could find more diverse representation in the authors. I could worry less about page limits and more about finding people who could get the reviews done. And we started reviewing other things beyond popular culture studies books. Christopher Olson, the current Reviews Editor, wrote our first non-book review on the movie *The Interview*. We opened up reviews to be more than just books. But that presented its own problems. People wanted to turn in criticism and reviews that weren't grounded in academia. That presented a little bit of a dilemma about how to be inclusive of different perspectives but still keep it academic?

Kathleen Turner Ledgerwood: In 2016, Bob Batchelor stepped down as the journal editor and Norma Jones graciously stepped in as editor, so that MPCA/ACA could have time to put together a call for an editor and solicit nominations for the

next editor. In this time, Norma took us from one volume with a double issue a year to putting out at least two separate issues a year, and she ushered in an era of PCSJ soliciting special issues to expand our offerings. When Norma Jones became the Editor, Julia Largent gracefully stepped into the Managing Editor role, formalizing and changing protocols for PCSJ that launched the journal into a sustainable, new era.

Norma Jones: I still miss him and his guidance. He was one of the first mentors I had in grad school that did not try to squash me. Grad school was interesting for me because I had a 15-year career running international businesses at the executive level. So, it was weird learning from people my age but with different professional experiences. He trusted me and Brent to carry out his vision. He was also one of the only people in grad school that pushed me ahead of himself to let me shine.

Malynda Johnson: When Jennifer Dunn needed someone to take over, because she had a lot going on with her actual career demanding more of her, she asked me if I would be willing to be Reviews Editor. I think I had just done a couple book reviews for her. So, she passed the torch. We did more popular culture reviews, and I wanted the reviews to deal more with pedagogical possibilities, like helping other people to know how to use popular culture texts in their teaching. I wanted the reviews to help people think about these texts in a different way. I wanted to give a space where we could talk and think about how to use these texts and artifacts in a different way, whether it was critiquing or using them as teaching tools. There are important conversations that take place outside of books, and critiques of society that take place in different types of media. So why not review these non-traditional texts as well? I did it for a couple years, and then I got to the same point of like I have other things I need to do. Christopher Olson had stepped in as my assistant editor, so I was like, “Hey, here you go.”

Normal Jones: I continued onward, and it was great to learn how to run the back end of journals. When Bob left, folks were nice enough to let me finish his term. I especially enjoyed the special sections and issues that allowed us to explore out of the box thinking and stuff. Since I had experience hiring/firing/training international staff, the turnover was like any other. Bob let me create processes that we were able to carry over. I’m curious to see what you are doing now!

Kathleen Turner Ledgerwood: PCSJ is now on our third journal Editor, CarrieLynn D. Reinhard, who has led the journal to gather even more special issues on a variety of subjects, has brought on more editor positions to help with the workload, and has initiated a variety of interviews and discussions to make the

scholarship in the journal more accessible and more public. These new mediums for sharing scholarship and popular culture studies have really expanded the scopes and helped expand the journal in new and exciting ways.

My time working on PCSJ has meant so much to me as a scholar because I've worked with and met so many established scholars, and I've also met some of the most brilliant young scholars. Really this journal not only became an important publication from the Midwest regional PCA, but it has become a space for a wide variety of scholarship to bloom, for connections to be made, and most especially to highlight the contributions of student work and emerging scholars. It has been a privilege to see so many careers take off after publishing in PCSJ, to see the connections that people make, and to read so much popular culture scholarship in the 10 volumes of the journal's publication. As we celebrate a decade of launching this independent, peer-reviewed, open-access journal, I cannot help but think of the great journal we started for MPCA/ACA and how far we have come. I am so grateful for all the people who have worked on the Editorial Advisory Board, who have worked as editors, reviewed submissions, and authored contributions in the journal. A journal is a team effort with strong leaders, and I'm fortunate to have spent so many years working with such talented scholars who remain so generous with their time.

Looking Back to Look Forward

Bob Batchelor: When I look back at the Table of Contents now, I see that there were a couple articles that developed into books. Another thing I was passionate about was creating an awards process to go along with the journal. Popular culture studies really lacks awards, say in relation to Comms associations and others, so we created this too.

So, were there downfalls/shortcomings? Sure. I was way too busy to be running what was quickly becoming a full-time gig. Back then, most people weren't as keen on self-care and those kinds of topics. I was struggling with some issues that forced me to put time and effort into other areas. I'm strong at getting big ideas off the ground and operable, as well as marketing and promotion. I'm not as good at low-level tactics, which are so crucial. Plus, we didn't have any software, etc., to run the system. Those existed, but we didn't utilize them or investigate fully.

And everyone else was just as busy, from the Editorial Board through the Associate and Assistant Editors I had. So, we didn't initially get the Book Review section

where I wanted it, though Jennifer Dunn really made it better. We did some special sections, but I would have wanted to do more. We probably could have done more to market PCSJ better. I think the numbers were pretty good, but they could have been much better. I'm probably most proud of just the sheer number of pages we produced of high-quality work. The editorial team was really talented, and the Editorial Board was strong.

I don't really keep up with PCSJ enough to comment on what I would like to see. I think generically that popular culture studies is important in helping people get a better handle on their lives as citizens and humans. So, I would like PCSJ to continue delivering high quality work to audiences that desperately need the ability to think historically and with context about all the complexities of life today, from the things they spend their time watching to the way they determine political and societal choices.

As founding editor, I'm happy that PCSJ continues to thrive. Congrats to you and the team that keeps it alive!

Norma Jones: It was awesome. I felt that we created something special. I loved the look and feel of the piece. It reminded me of the work my mom did when she started one of the first bilingual magazines in the U.S. I really loved our look and feel. It just felt different. I also respected the push to make it open access. I felt that Bob's vision reflected the democracy of popular culture.

Nick Bestor: Especially with the way that the academic market is going, we're probably going to see a lot more independent scholars. And for independent scholars, given the barriers to even get access to "official" journals – the moneymakers – I think an open access journal is a great venue.

Gary Burns: I hope that at some point in the future the access to the journal will be more direct, via JSTOR or similar database. It needs to be in the world where people can find it and access it without just going to the website. I think it is not as widely known as it could be, so I hope that will change over time. I would like to see the journal get indexed in WorldCat so that it can become more widely known. Other than that, it's just great what we're doing.

Paul Booth: I think the journal needs to be more well-known, but I don't know how to do that. When there are students at the conference who are like, where am I going to publish – unless someone tells them about the journal, then they don't know about it. I think that's a big problem. And they're probably flip sides of the

same coin. People know about the journal, or they know about the conference – but they don't know about each of them.

Malynnda Johnson: What we've been doing to cultivate and work with young scholars, I think, is something that can be our niche. Our area can be helping undergraduate and graduate students get their first publication. I know any time I talk to my students about their work and say, "Hey, this is publishable, you could keep working on it and get it published," their eyes light up. The problem is, they don't always know how to do that, and they don't have the confidence – nor do they get the support from the bigger journals. Those journals don't take the time to help them really hone and craft their writing.

That's something we have done, but I think it would be something that we could do even more of. Maybe by having a section of the journal dedicated to helping students with their writing. And the fact that we are willing to do that – maybe that's the narrative that we need to make a little louder. We have people that are willing to work with you and take time to help you. We're not going to just reject the work if there's any nugget of something unique. No matter how much polishing it's going to take, our goal is to help you.

On the one hand, I think that is very good for cultivating a safer space for younger scholars. But then it does present the problem of how do we get taken seriously? And I guess, I don't care. That's the old guard. You can go find that elsewhere. But how are young people going to learn how to write like scholars and understand the publication process if they don't have the opportunities to learn?

We have enough journals, even in popular culture studies, and some are top-tier, high ranking journals. We're not going to compete with them. In my opinion, I don't see us wanting to. So why not be the journal in this area that helps, motivates, encourages, and mentors younger scholars? Let's not wash away people's passion for their work.