

## **Editing a Special Issue of *Contemporary Social Science***

The policy of the Journal of the Academy of Social Sciences is to encourage specially edited issues on topics of broad interest across the social sciences. To facilitate the editing of these issues I have prepared the following notes.

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**Intent:** The journal aims to be interdisciplinary, of interest and value across the social sciences. However, the social sciences cover a range of disciplines that have different styles, cultures and foci of interest. So although they merge into each other in various ways, providing an open-ended forum for individual papers has only limited appeal. The journal does continue to accept individual papers, but the emphasis is on special issues.

The social sciences come together around topics of common concern. Therefore the journal is framed, in the main, around special issues that are fundamentally multi-disciplinary. So although any one paper may be clearly within a distinct discipline, because it relates to a topic of broad social science interest, that paper will nonetheless be of some value to people embedded within other disciplines. An obvious example is special issue on the Social Science of Alcohol. Health practitioners studying particular treatment programmes for alcoholics would benefit from some understanding of economics of alcohol consumption. Both economists and therapists would be interested in anthropological considerations of alcohol use. So whilst a journal of alcohol studies would be open to many of these papers *Contemporary Social Science* can offer a deliberately cross-disciplinary perspective that acts as a key resource for people interested in the topic. It also provides an insight into how different disciplines are approaching specific aspects of the topic, which is of general interest across the social sciences.

**Content:** Special issues typically contain between 5 and 8 journal articles drawn from different social sciences, exploring specific aspects of the topic of concern. Each paper will be a formal journal article dealing with a substantive issue, making a contribution to at least one parent discipline. This is a journal, not a book of readings or a textbook, so papers will in general be expected to focus on specific issues and be empirically based. Broad ranging, speculative essays will be the exception to the general principle of focused journal articles backed up by clear evidence. It is anticipated that each article will be between 5,000 and 8,000 words, following the journal format as in notes for contributors on the website.

*Editorial* - An important paper in the issue is the overview of the field contributed by the special issue editor. This is a distinct paper (not just an editorial mentioning the papers or the conference at which they may have first seen the light of day). It has an informative title (not just 'Editorial'), cites the papers in the special issue as if they are in another journal and

puts these papers into the context of the area in general. These reviews are usually made freely available online and act as important, standalone contributions to the literature, which are typically the most downloaded papers from the special issue.

The purpose of this editorial review is to enable readers to appreciate the framework the contributory papers are part of and as an entry point for the domain of the special issue. It is important to emphasise that this paper will be downloaded independently of any other papers in the special issue and so needs to stand alone. It will be reviewed before publication as an aid to ensuring it is as effective as possible.

*Illustrations* – If at all possible a photograph from one of the contributors will be selected for the cover of the Journal. The copyright should be held by the contributor and will be acknowledge inside the front cover of the journal. Further illustrations that contribute to the understanding of journal articles are also encouraged.

**Process:** The usual, although not inevitable, procedure for creating a special issue goes through the following stages –

1. People interested in editing a special issue contact me and outline their proposal.
2. Once we agree the proposal, a call for papers, drafted by the proposed special issue editor(s), is agreed with me. An example from a recent call for papers is attached at the end of this note. The call crucially contains
  - a. An outline of the topic, emphasising its multi-disciplinary reach
  - b. The deadline for submissions, which I will agree with the editor, but typically is about six months from the date of agreeing the call.
  - c. An indication of how papers are to be submitted, which is discussed below.
3. This call goes quickly on the journal website and is printed in the next available issue of the Journal.
4. The special issue editor(s) and their colleagues invite people to contribute to the special issue, and make the call for papers available far and wide.
5. The preferred way for processing submitted papers is for the special issue editor(s) to manage submissions directly, probably by email.

The special issue editor will identify reviewers for each paper and organise reciprocally blind reviews of the papers and feedback directly to the authors. They will thus obtain revisions of acceptable papers, making the decision about the papers. If at any stage help is needed with the review process than I am happy to assist.

6. Along the way I need to be kept informed of progress with submissions and informed of who is being approached for reviews and the number of likely papers for

the special issue. If the number of papers does not make a special issue we can create a special section in the journal. If the number of papers is greater than a special issue can accommodate we can explore the possibility of an extended special issue or other options, such as some for the journal and the rest added for a book, as noted below.

7. The special issue editor(s) eventually submit the accepted final list of papers to me.
8. Once I agree that list, they then instruct the authors to submit these final versions through the Manuscript Central online system.

It would be good if reviewers got some feedback on their comments in the form of copies of other reviewers' comments and the editorial decision, but I leave that up to the special issue editor(s).

9. Once the final versions of the papers are accepted through the online system they go through the normal production process, proofs being sent to the authors and individual authors being required to sign copyright forms.
10. Once proofs have been corrected and returned they paper goes online quite quickly, becoming widely available.
11. I prepare a podcast for the web page of the journal, and a blog for Social Science Space, describing the work in the special issue.

**Subsequently:** There is now a special series of books: *Issues in Contemporary Social Science*, derived directly from special issues. These incorporate all the papers in the Journal issue and perhaps one other that could be a development of the editor's review or a concluding chapter. The production of a book is not automatic but depends on an internal assessment process by the publishers but so far the following special issues are being published as books within this series:

- *Crowds in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*
- *Biologising the Social Sciences: Challenging Darwinian and Social Science Explanations*
- *The Social Dynamics of Web 2.0*

### **Special Issue Topics Already Published**

- Post-Conflict Societies - published February 2011
- Challenge, Change or Crisis in Global Higher Education? – June 2011
- Crowds in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – published November 2011
- Biologising the Social Sciences: Challenging Darwinian and Neuroscience Explanations – Published June 2012
- The Social Dynamics of Web 2.0 – published November 2012
- Alcohol, Public Policy and Social Science – published February 2013

- Young People, Social Science Research and the Law – published June 2013

Future special issue topics in press include *Olympic Legacies*, *The Social Science of Protest*, and *Knowledge Transfer*.

**Example of a Call for Papers:**

**CALL FOR PAPERS**

Special Issue of

***Contemporary Social Science***

***The Social Dynamics of Web 2.0***

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The developments widely known as Web 2.0 are mainly characterized by the overwhelming ability of users to collaboratively create content. The impact this is having on a wide range of social processes, as varied as marketing and personal relationships, politics and tourism is making these developments a fascinating focus for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary social science research.

This special issue calls for papers that address the impact of Web 2.0 on contemporary society and its dynamics. It seeks high quality contributions to review and analyse Web 2.0 as the basis for collective action and as a source of societal destabilisation and change. We welcome original articles, including quantitative or qualitative studies, case studies, or critical reviews, dealing with aspects of the influence and potential of Web 2.0 (for better or for worse). Soundly empirically based studies will be emphasised although high quality scholarly essays are also welcome.

Manuscripts should follow the usual instructions for electronic submission of papers to *Contemporary Social Science*. Authors should indicate that they wish the manuscript to be reviewed for inclusion in the special issue. The Editors of this issue would be happy to review plans for papers in advance of their receipt. All papers will be peer reviewed. The closing date for submitting papers is 10<sup>th</sup> October 2011. The corresponding Special Editor for this issue is:

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