Editorial Introduction

The Creative Power of Historical Artifacts

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We are excited to share with you the second issue of the *Studying the History of Higher Education Journal (SHHEJ)*, published under the auspices of the Russel Center for the Study of Higher Education of the University of Toledo's Higher Education program! The *SHHEJ* offers students and emerging scholars of the history of higher education a venue to publish their historical research and to promote dialogue in the academic community. Through mentorship, peer collaboration, and a commitment to academic excellence, our editorial team aims to foster a supportive environment where students and other rising historians can refine their research skills, disseminate their findings, and make meaningful contributions to the field of higher education history.

The historical essays in this second issue of *SHHEJ* share a common thread: they were all triggered by a chance encounter, whether with an email message, a plaque in the college hallway, a yard-sale discussion and a document signature, a photo, or even a challenging question. Historians have often lauded the creative power of historical artifacts both for research and for teaching. Historical artifacts do not just help confirm facts; they evoke sensory and emotional responses; they activate the past, provoke new stories, challenge assumptions, and spark imaginative inquiry. They are active springboards for thought (Prown, 1982).

The authors in this issue were all sent on a journey of discovery after a chance encounter with such artifacts or events in their college or university. These chance encounters triggered questions for them and pushed them into the archival records in a search for answers. These chance encounters served as springboards for thought. The authors' stories come to life in our issue.

An administrative email related to a student-planned "Gaza Solidarity Encampment" at Dartmouth College in May of 2024 triggered Nora Cai's curiosity and her article, "Historicizing the Freedom of Expression and Dissent at Dartmouth College." This first article in the issue is rooted in the student activism of the 1960s and the 1980s when many student-led movements brought

political and cultural change across the country. Across many college campuses, administrative responses to student-led protests yielded a web of permissible speech and conduct policies that were refined with each subsequent event. Cai traces the development of speech and conduct policies at Dartmouth College, specifically the Freedom of Expression and Dissent (FED) policy and its associated conduct regulations. Her study follows Dartmouth's policies' evolution through three crucial protest periods: the George Wallace protests of the early to mid-1960s, the anti-Vietnam war movement in the late 1960s, and the anti-apartheid protests of the mid- to late 1980s. For Cai, Dartmouth's FED policy and conduct regulations emerged and evolved more out of desire to control, rather than protect, free expression and dissent at the College.

An encounter with a plaque in a hallway at Vassar College inspired the second article in this issue, titled "Education for the Race: The History of Euthenics and Eugenics at Vassar College." Anna Philippe's historical inquiry provides glimpses in the critical role of academic institutions in the eugenics movement of early 20th century United States. In this context, Philippe focusses her sights on a unique program at Vassar College designed around the idea of "euthenics," or the science of improving human living conditions. As Philippe demonstrates, Vassar's euthenics program, established in 1924, in essence aimed to legitimize eugenics as a field of study and to train eugenics field workers. The program received support from administrators, faculty, students, and important individuals in the eugenics movements such as Margaret Sanger and Charles Davenport. The euthenics initiatives at Vassar lasted for about a decade but the awareness of their role and the institutional discourse on the eugenics' history of the College have remained limited. Philippe's article calls for increased institutional accountability in grappling with its past.

The third article in the issue centers on Edward Janak's research journey prompted by a chance discussion with an acquaintance at a yard sale and an encounter with a signature. His article, titled "I Decline to Play the Part of the Fish Dangling on the End of Your Line": How a Blind Politician Led the Way to a Historical Dissertation Topic," tackles the relationship between biographer and biographical subject while simultaneously offering us insights into the life of John E. Swearingen. Swearingen served as State Superintendent of Public Instruction in South Carolina in the period 1909–1922, a period marked by progressivism and its widespread social activism and political reform. He was

the first blind person elected to public office in the state. Janak discovered Swearingen as a biographical subject while researching the archived correspondence between the General Education Board (GEB) and the South Carolina State Department of Education. Founded and supported by the Rockefeller family, the GEB focused on two specific issues: Southern education and general education. As superintendent, Swearingen had a complex and contentious relationship with the GEB. His bluntness and support for marginalized populations ran against the general philosophy of the GEB and characterized his life and his educational career.

The subjectivity inherent in biographical writing is also at the heart of the fourth article in this issue: "Biographical Writing through the Lens of Lawrence A. Cremin's Leadership and Presidency at Teachers College." Travis Brown's encounter with a photo of Lawrence Cremin, taken during Cremin's first inaugural address as president of Teachers College, portrayed a specific image of an inspirational leader whose style Brown set to uncover. Cremin was president of Teachers College in the period 1974–1984 and a prolific author best known for his three-volume work *American Education* (published between 1970 and 1988). However, the intensive archival research influenced Brown's perceptions of Cremin and his leadership style. Cremin's presidency took place during a challenging time for higher education. As an institutional leader, Cremin struggled with shared governance and consistently opted for isolated and authoritarian administrative decisions. Throughout the article, Brown describes his gradual discoveries of Cremin's leadership experiences and complex beliefs, and emphasizes the uncertainty inherent in life-writing.

Finally, Matthew Hazelton's article, "The Road Less Travelled: L.L. Nunn and the Birth of the Nunnian Microcollege," reflects the author's encounter with a challenging question: How can today's colleges and universities address diminishing enrollments and plummeting public appreciation of higher education? How can they re-engage students? Hazelton's search for an answer directed him towards the microcollege movement of the late 19th–early 20th century. The first microcollege-type institutions, the Telluride Institute (1891), the Telluride Association (1910), and the Deep Springs College (1917), were founded by the eccentric Gilded Age energy tycoon L.L. Nunn. While Nunn's educational ventures often reflected broad trends in higher education at the time, his core educational principles evolved over his career.

For Hazelton, Nunn's philosophy of education, employing the principles of self-government, intellectual and academic rigor, physical work, and societal isolation, not only stands out as unique, but also provides many lessons for today's leaders of higher education.

The thoughtful and appealing historical essays in this second journal issue uncover neglected stories in the history of higher education and engage with the art of historical writing from diverse perspectives. We believe they will open up a wealth of ideas for you as well!

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References

Prown, J. D. (1982, Spring). Mind in matter: An introduction to material culture theory and method. *Winterthur Portfolio, 17*(1), 1–19.