



Intellectual directions for *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences*, 2019–2023

Giovanni Boniolo¹ · Sabina Leonelli²

© Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2019

To begin a 5-years stint as editors-in-chief of what is probably the oldest journal dealing with philosophical, historical and societal aspects of the life sciences is both a big challenge and a big responsibility. We received a journal revitalized by the wonderful job made by Staffan Müller-Wille and his staff, as well as the assistance of Springer in bringing HPLS fully into the digital age, and for this we are very thankful. In this brief editorial, we outline some of the ways in which we hope to continue to innovate the contents and format of HPLS, improve the quality and scope of its contents, and further expand its readership and contributors. During the last few years, *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences* has emerged as one of the foremost publication venues for work in the history, philosophy and societal implications of the life sciences, normative aspects included. Our editorial project builds on this legacy of success by continuing to publish contributions in these domains. We interpret the field of “life sciences” in a broad way to include biomedical sciences, environmental sciences, cognitive sciences as well as applied fields such biotechnology—in other words, all the disciplines that intersect with the many and diverse aspect of life.

Given our own backgrounds and expertise, we value contributions that engage scientific research as it is carried out in practice, from both theoretical and empirical points of view. We also wish to highlight the historical and epistemic role of technologies and related norms in the development and application of knowledge of the natural world. At the same time, we are very open to other approaches and concerns,

✉ Giovanni Boniolo
giovanni.boniolo@unife.it

✉ Sabina Leonelli
s.leonelli@exeter.ac.uk

¹ University of Ferrara, Ferrara, Italy

² University of Exeter, Exeter, UK

and to proposals for innovative topics. For example, we hope to include and promote empirical research that makes use of quantitative methods and data-intensive techniques, which have so far received little attention in the history and philosophy of science; and on the conceptual side, we hope to encourage dialogue between analytic and continental modes of philosophical analysis, as well as between more and less formal methods. Indeed, we conceive of this journal as primarily committed to fostering and showcasing epistemic diversity, thus acting as a *palaestra* of ideas and discussions for junior and senior scholars working in diverse areas of the world, including Africa, Latin America, and Asia–Pacific besides Europe and North America. While the journal no longer publishes contributions in languages other than English, we strongly believe that promoting understanding across cultural and linguistic approaches, philosophical traditions and methodological perspectives is invaluable, particularly given the conflicts surrounding the development and use of science and technology in the contemporary world. As non-native English speakers ourselves, we understand and empathise with authors learning to express themselves in that language, and we shall strive to support prospective contributors by continuing to provide the kind of detailed and careful feedback with which Staffan Müller-Wille has spoiled us all so far.

Of course, openness to innovative and diverse content needs to be balanced against demands for rigor and excellence. We will expect contributors to make every effort to provide articles that are clearly written, historically and scientifically rigorous, and presenting a focused question and well-developed argument. To help us monitor and foster research excellence, we will be working with a fantastic team of associate editors with diverse skills and expertise, which includes Justin Garson, Lisa Onaga and David Teira [<https://www.springer.com/philosophy/epistemology+and+philosophy+of+science/journal/40656?detailsPage=editorialBoard>]. Dan Nicholson will continue in his role as book reviews editor, and welcomes suggestions for books to be reviewed. Again in the spirit of promoting diversity, we are particularly interested in reviews of high quality books written in languages other than English. Finally, we have expanded our editorial board to include thirty prominent scholars representing various traditions, topical interests, geographical locations and disciplinary approaches.

We are well-aware that fostering a culture of openness includes helping to promote open research practices, such as Open Access and Open Data, in our field. These are exciting times for the publishing industry and for the future of scholarly communication, with several initiatives—most prominently perhaps the European “Plan S” [<https://www.coalition-s.org/>]¹—attempting to shake existing publishing practices. We shall engage closely in such discussions, both with SpringerNature and with other journals in the field, as well as in dialogue with research-oriented institutions and the European Commission. We encourage our readers to do the same, and to send us suggestions and feedback on this as on any other area. In full acknowledgment that open research involves the ability to capture many different aspects of scholarly work, we will look to develop guidelines for depositing data and other materials used within the papers that we publish, so as to foster open research practices within the history, philosophy and social studies of the life sciences. As a starting point, we recommend that our authors post preprints of the accepted version

of their papers, for instance using non-for-profit repositories run by peers for peers such as the PhilSci Archive [<http://philsci-archive.pitt.edu/>]. We also advise making related data (such as archival entries, annotated bibliographies and interview transcripts) available in freely accessible repositories such as Zenodo [<https://zenodo.org/>], which provide a unique Digital Object Identifier that can be included in the final version of the paper.

Another way to encourage more openness is to gradually move our peer review system towards a more transparent model, within which referees receive more recognition for the crucial service and reviewing mechanisms encourage real dialogue between referees and authors, with the goal of fostering the best possible contributions. From this year, HPLS will give referees the option of disclosing their identity to authors, thus providing an opportunity for more accountability in the peer review procedure. Referees will still be able to remain anonymous if they so wish. We will also commit to letting referees know what decisions are being taken on the papers that they comment on, so that you see the significance of your input for editorial judgment. Eventually, we hope to move towards a system where signed reviews can be made openly available to readers who wish to track the evolution of a paper and acknowledge the work of referees in providing insightful suggestions. We are discussing options with Springer, and will be updating our readership on opportunities as they develop.

To conclude, we would highlight that besides the usual submitted articles and the book reviews, we encourage the submission of topical collections dealing with themes of interest to the journal (which should be sent to us over email in the first instance), as well as a new category of submissions called “critical reviews”, offering a summative outlook over the newest development and historical trajectories in relation to a particular topic. Finally, we will be implementing the novel category of “nominated papers.” Each member of our senior Advisory Board [<https://www.springer.com/philosophy/epistemology+and+philosophy+of+science/journal/40656?detailsPage=editorialBoard>] has the opportunity to nominate, at a maximum of one per year, a previously unpublished paper and will assume responsibility for its content and quality along with another member of the editorial staff assigned by the Editors-in-Chief. The names of the Advisory Board member and the editorial staff member responsible for suggesting such contribution will be explicitly indicated in the paper. This innovative mechanism should stimulate scholars to publish their most innovative work in HPLS through the explicit support of a leading scholar (i.e. the member of the AB). We are particularly interested in highlighting scholarships by researchers who may not habitually write in English and/or who are in the earlier stages of their career, and who would therefore most benefit from mentorship and dedicated support.

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.