

LEADERSHIP NARRATIVES/REFLECTIONS

A Brief History of Academic Journals: Foundations of Knowledge and Community

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Recent critiques of diversity, equity, and inclusion in education, including the overturning of affirmative action and banning the teaching of critical race theory, have emboldened scrutiny of diversity in higher education, research, and the professional world. In this cultural climate, embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout academia is extremely important. The history of diversity in academia, particularly in STEM, provides the necessary context as to why many leaders are increasing their focus on diversity. STEM history is one of discrimination and perseverance. Black STEM students and professionals have been systematically denied access, respect, and accreditation in their fields. This legacy remains prevalent in the STEM field, with many conscious and unconscious barriers to STEM education remaining. Many STEM leaders are working for change and development in the field, following in the footsteps of revolutionaries who created space for themselves.

Leadership Positionality Statement

Amanda Gallagher: I am a white, cis-gendered female historian. As a historian, I use my privileges and identities to impact and inform my passion for history as I honor and create space for forgotten voices and narratives. History is best learned through the silences. In my work, I aim to study and understand those silences to create as full a historical narrative as possible. I hope to share my research and knowledge to educate and challenge others.

Academic Journals

Academic journals have long been an essential component of scholarship. Since their inception, they have functioned as spaces to disseminate knowledge, credit academics, inform readers, and establish communities. In addition, they are spaces in which scholars can register their work and receive feedback from their disciplinary community, creating and encouraging scholarly connections and upholding academic standards. Indeed, the structure of academia is deeply intertwined with journal publication, which is viewed as a measure of success in one's field and a tool for the pursuit of tenure and job security.

The first academic journal, *Journal des Sçavans*, was published in Paris in 1665 as a forum to disseminate information and connect with scholars. The journal's founder and first editor, Jean-Denis de Sallo, described the

purpose of the journal as “making known the experiments in Physics and Chemistry...which may serve to explain the effects of Nature, and the new discoveries made in Arts & Sciences” (de Sallo, n.d.). Although it was not exclusively a scientific journal and nor were the contributions peer-reviewed – meaning it would not meet modern publishing standards – the *Journal des Sçavans* was revolutionary for academics and broader society at the time. It created a new space within academia and paved the way for the thousands of journals that have been published since. As journals developed, they became more nuanced and scholarly, with new titles established to disseminate knowledge in specific subjects and with the application of stricter publishing criteria (Rallison, 2015). Academic journals continue to adapt, such as with the establishment of online journals that render scholarly output more widely available.

Black Academic Journals

Black academic journals provide forums for Black scholars to engage with each other and access the information and credibility denied them by other journals. These journals allow Black academics to share research pertinent to their work as scientists and educators. The first Black periodical, *Freedom's Journal*, was founded in 1827. It provided a forum for developing a “community ethos” and laid the groundwork for the Black academic community. It was widely circulated through subscriptions and word of mouth, making its content far-reaching and impactful. Despite limited access to education among free Black people of the 18th Century, this journal published academic articles as a source of information about Black people and served as a scaffold for community building. Historian Emma Stave (2020) has argued that *Freedom's Journal* demonstrated the importance of collective knowledge and connections across multiple barriers in the Black community and it has had lasting implications for identity development in higher education in the United States. Among the topics that the journal addressed were class relations, the struggle for freedom, establishing a Black nation, and women's rights. Stave (2020) argues that, despite its short-lived existence, *Freedom's Journal* contributed to a “collective Black consciousness.” It was disseminated to eleven states, and to Canada, Haiti, and the United Kingdom.

As Black journals grew in importance over time, Black scholars had access to more publishing opportunities. Following in the tradition of *Freedom's Journal*, Carter G. Woodson founded *The Journal of Negro History* (later renamed *The Journal of African American History*) in 1916 (Dagbovie, n.d.). Woodson's journal reinforced the importance of academic spaces for the Black community. Researchers and professionals utilized the journal to disseminate their work and to learn about the work of other scholars. Contributing scholars received feedback and gained insight into the different

contexts and complexities of Black academia. Today, the journal remains a leading space for the dissemination of Black scholarship, publishing research that expansively covers Black history and contemporary life.

The academic journal remains a foundation for academic spaces, connecting, informing, and validating scholars, as well as forming and sustaining communities (Rallison, 2015). Early Black academic journals were essential for academic identity formation and for information dissemination. Established and new journals remain important in the face of continually disputed diversity in academia. In today's political and academic climate, Black academic journals are important tools for bolstering the academic community, challenging narratives, and supporting professional growth. The *Journal of STEM Leadership and Broadening Participation* reflects the growth of the STEM field and the importance of diversifying STEM leadership and knowledge while acknowledging the need for further growth and acceptance. I believe that this journal follows a long line of academic journals designed to engage and inform the Black STEM community and is a powerful tool that will contribute to diversifying STEM leadership and access.

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Amanda Gallagher has her master's in public history and currently works in the Office of Undergraduate STEM Education at the American Association of Colleges and Universities. Her work includes assisting the Vice President of the office and supporting office programming. She is passionate about history and is currently researching the history of STEM education at HBCUs. She wants to establish a deeper understanding of the role of history in modern standards of STEM higher education.

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