



Editorial

Closing an Eight-Year Chapter: Thanks and Reflections as Editor in Chief

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After eight years, my term as Editor in Chief of *Social Sciences* has come to an end. It has been a great and fascinating experience; I have learnt a lot, particularly about online, open-access publishing and a (very) wide range of substantive, methodological, and theoretical issues in the broader social sciences. However, I also think it is important for a new Editor in Chief to take over to provide the journal with a new set of perspectives and fresh ideas.

I have recognised the cruciality of—and been greatly impressed by—the hard work and commitment of a wide range of colleagues: the Editorial Board, our Journal Reviewers, the Topical Advisory Panel, our Special Guest editors, and our Section leads and panel members. The efficiency and dedication of the MDPI staff are key to ensuring the smooth and efficient running of this journal, in addition, of course, to the authors, without whom we would not have a journal.

During these eight years, we have seen significant developments. The number of articles submitted and published has grown steadily. The number of visits to the journal from a wide range of countries has grown six-fold since 2020, and we have consolidated our Cite and Impact Factor scores.

We have also seen some interesting changes in the focus and concerns of the articles published. In particular, and unsurprisingly, social media and AI figure very highly in this mix—in a way that was not the case eight years ago. Such articles have proved popular to download and been cited numerous times.

For example, the article by Michael Gerlich, published in September 2023, which reported on a study involving 1389 scholars in the US, the UK, Germany, and Switzerland, demonstrated how views of AI varied depending on the respondents' views about relative trustworthiness, associated risks, and usage/acceptance. Those discerning AI's threats often viewed its prospective outcomes pessimistically, while supportive proponents recognised its positive transformative potential.

Similarly, the research reported by Saude, Barros, and Almeida, published in August 2024, discussed some of the challenges of introducing generative AI into higher education. While the students involved in the study demonstrated an awareness of both the risks and benefits associated with introducing generative AI, the authors concluded that failing to recognise and effectively use generative AI can impede educational progress and hamper the development of student's critical thinking skills. The challenges for all concerned are considerable.

One of the challenges this journal has had to face is recognising that while its wide breadth is a major strength, attempting to include the full range of the social sciences can

Received: 31 January 2026

Accepted: 2 February 2026

Published: 11 February 2026

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inhibit the more specific focus that one might achieve with a single-discipline journal. We have tried to address this issue by introducing a number of subject-specific Sections. The number and importance of these Sections have increased, and we now have Sections on Gender Studies; Childhood and Youth Studies; Crime and Justice; Family Studies; Contemporary Politics and Society; Social Economics; and International Migration—all headed by their own Section Editors in Chief.

As I have said previously, the articles reflect and feed into the debates and issues of the day, as evidenced by the increasing concern with social media and AI. The journal appeals to an interdisciplinary academic audience and authorship and focuses on contemporary, real-world research.

The journal has an important role to play in supporting the social sciences in Universities and elsewhere. The social sciences have come under increasing financial and ideological attack in many countries in recent years, so it is important for the journal to provide a supportive platform for academics and students working in the field.

Finally, I would like to wish Daniel McCarthy the very best in his role as the new Editor in Chief, and I wish *Social Sciences* the very best for the future and hope that it goes from strength to strength.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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