

André Wessels¹
Senior Professor and
Head of the Department
of History, University of
the Free State;
Visiting Professor,
University of New South
Wales at the Australian
Defence Force Academy
(UNSW@ADFA),
Canberra.
wesselsa@ufs.ac.za

DOI: [https://dx.doi.org/
10.18820/24150509/
JCH41.v2.1](https://dx.doi.org/10.18820/24150509/JCH41.v2.1)

ISSN 0258-2422 (Print)
ISSN 2415-0509 (Online)

Journal for
Contemporary History
2016 41(2):1-19
© UV/UFS



40: THE JOURNAL FOR CONTEMPORARY HISTORY, 1975 TO 2015¹

Abstract

The *Journal for Contemporary History / Joernaal vir Eietydse Geskiedenis* – henceforth referred to as the JCH – was established in 1975 at the University of the Orange Free State (since 2001, the University of the Free State) in Bloemfontein, South Africa. In the course of its first 40 years, the JCH had only five Editors. In the years 1975 to 2015, no fewer than 764 articles and 246 book reviews appeared in 94 editions of the JCH. In this article, written by one of the former JCH Editors, the history of this accredited, peer-reviewed academic journal is traced, and its content is critically evaluated. Issues that are addressed include the themes that have been dealt with in JCH articles, the extent to which the profile of the authors have changed in the course of 40 years, the evolution of the JCH's Editorial Board, and what role book reviews have played. Although some of the information that has emerged from the analysis and evaluation may be regarded as merely ephemeral in nature, certain data and other information could be regarded as essential for determining the degree of success that the JCH has thus far achieved, and how it may be of value for future planning.

Keywords: *Journal for Contemporary History; University of the (Orange) Free State; academic journals; contemporary history as a sub-discipline of History.*

Sleutelwoorde: *Joernaal vir Eietydse Geskiedenis; Universiteit van die (Oranje-)Vrystaat; akademiese tydskrifte; eietydse geskiedenis as 'n sub-dissipline van Geskiedenis.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1975 there appeared a new, but modest 32-page journal with a tri-lingual title: *Joernaal vir Eietydse Geskiedenis/Journal for Contemporary History/Journal für Zeitgeschichte*. It was the mouthpiece of the Institute for Contemporary History (which was established in 1970). It contained three articles (two in English, one in German), and was published

¹ The author was the Editor of the *Journal for Contemporary History* from 13 June 2007 until 31 December 2014. He gratefully acknowledges the assistance and/or information provided by Professor Pieter Coetzer, Ms Izette Bredenkamp, Ms Gerda Bester and Ms Hesma van Tonder.

by the above-mentioned Institute for Contemporary History at the University of the Orange Free State (UOFS) – since 2001 known as the University of the Free State (UFS).² Forty years and 94 editions later, the *Journal for Contemporary History* (henceforth referred to in this article as the *JCH* or as the *Journal*) is still published at the UFS, albeit now under the direction of the Department of Philosophy.

Proceeding from the assumption that in the course of its first 40 years of existence, the *JCH* has made a notable and worthwhile contribution to the historical discourse in South Africa, the main purpose of this article is to critically evaluate the *JCH*'s content, 1975-2015. Forty years after the *JCH* first appeared, it is also appropriate that the first four decades of the history of this accredited, national academic journal should be put on record. By evaluating the content of its 94 editions published in the years 1975 until the end of 2015, light will also be shed on the evolution of a South African academic journal that focuses on contemporary history. In the process, issues, such as the composition of the Editorial Board, the financing of an academic journal, the physical evolution of the *JCH* (format, etc.), and language will be addressed, and answers will be sought with regard to several questions, for example: What contemporary history themes have been dealt with in the *JCH*? What trends can be identified? To what extent has the profile of the authors changed over the years? What role has book reviews played in the *Journal*? Some of the information that has emerged from the analysis and evaluation of the *JCH*, 1975-2015, and which has been included in this article, may be regarded as mere ephemeral information, but certain data which have come to light could be deemed essential for determining the degree of success that the *Journal* has thus far achieved, and which may be of value for future planning.

This article on the history, and related matters, of the *JCH*, follows in the footsteps of articles written to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the *South African Historical Journal*,³ the tenth and 35th anniversary of (*New*) *Contree*,⁴ and the 50th anniversary of *Historia* (in an article commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Historical Association of South Africa);⁵ albeit that this *JCH* 40 article has a somewhat different approach – *inter alia*, because most of the *JCH*'s documents of 1975 to 1998 no longer exist.

2 From grey to gold: The first 100 years of the University of the Free State (Bloemfontein: University of the Free State, 2006), pp. 173, 351-352.

3 BA le Cordeur, "The South African Historical Journal and the periodical literature of South African history", *South African Historical Journal* 20(1), 1988, pp. 1-16.

4 A Wessels, "Contree: Die eerste tien jaar", *Contree* 21, January 1987, pp. 26-29; ES van Eeden, "Regional, local, urban and rural history as nearby places: Historiographical and methodological reflections", *New Contree* 63, January 2012, pp. 1-24.

5 P Kapp, "Sinvol of sinister? Die Historiese Genootskap van Suid-Afrika vyftig jaar oud", *Historia* 51(2), November 2006, pp. 26-29.

2. THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF A CONTEMPORARY HISTORY JOURNAL

In the very first edition of the *JCH* there was no preface or introduction to the new journal. On the title page it was merely stated that the journal was published by the Institute for Contemporary History (INCH), followed by its postal address, but without any reference to the University of the Orange Free State (UOFS), and also without a date of publication indicated. On the page to the left of the title page (i.e. on the back of the front cover page) the members of the Editorial Board (O Geyser, PW Coetzer, JH le Roux and JJ Swanepoel) are indicated, without indicating an Editor, although in practice, PW Coetzer was the Editor, and it is stated that, "The editors invite the submission of articles based on original research, general historical research, general historical articles and critical reviews."⁶

By the 1970s, contemporary history as a sub-discipline of History was firmly established, despite the fact that the debate concerning its relevance and value continued, and indeed continues to this day. It was the Italian idealist philosopher, historian and critic, Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) who, for example, famously (infamously?) stated that every true history is a history of the present time; i.e. all history is contemporary history.⁷ In general, one can argue that contemporary history is the name that is given to the history of the very recent past. But where does the "recent past" begin, and does it include events of yesterday and of earlier today? Usually, contemporary history is regarded as the history of the last half century or less. In light of the fact that official government documents of the recent past are not always freely available, there are those who are of the opinion that informed historical judgement is not possible and that because the recent events are *too* recent, they cannot be seen in proper historical perspective. This said, contemporary historians reject these arguments by maintaining that through oral history (i.e. the writing of history by conducting

6 *Joernaal vir Eietydse Geskiedenis/Journal for Contemporary History/Journal für Zeitgeschichte* 1, [1975], p. 1 (title page) and (for the quotation) the page to the left of p. 1.

7 Croce as referred to by FA van Jaarsveld, *Die eise van ons tyd aan geskiedskrywing* (Inaugural lecture, Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit (now the University of Johannesburg), Johannesburg, 1968), p. 22. For more on Croce's work see, for example, the articles of HV White, "The abiding relevance of Croce's idea of history", *The Journal of Modern History* 35(2), June 1963, pp. 109-124; CM Destler, "Benedetto Croce and Italian fascism: A note on historical reliability", *The Journal of Modern History* 24(4), December 1952, pp. 382-390; and also the following books: ME Moss, *Benedetto Croce reconsidered: Truth and error in theories of art, literature, and history* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1987); K-E Lönne, *Benedetto Croce als Kritiker seiner Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeier Verlag, 1967); GNG Orsini, *Benedetto Croce: Philosopher of art and literary critic* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961); B Croce, *History of Europe in the nineteenth century* (London: Unwin University Books, 1965); B Croce, *History: Its theory and practice* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1960).

interviews) and by applying the techniques of the social sciences (for example, social surveys, and content analysis of the media) contemporary historians can indeed generate valid arguments.⁸

Many obstacles regarding the writing of contemporary history have been identified, but also how they might be overcome.⁹ There are those who point out that we cannot see the past in perspective if we are too near to it – but then it must also be kept in mind that strictly speaking, we cannot see the past at all.¹⁰ Cognisant of the fact that great volumes of contemporary governmental and other documents are released on a regular basis, events of 30 years ago (and even more recently) have become accessible to historical study.¹¹ The importance of oral history in writing the history of Africa, has also been alluded to.¹² But the debate with regard to the relevance, challenges and possibilities of contemporary history continues.¹³

Strangely enough, the question of what exactly contemporary history is and how it will be dealt with in the UFS's *JCH*, was never discussed in any preface of the *Journal*. (It must also be kept in mind that a preface was only included in 15 of the *Journal's* 94 editions, mostly in special editions, and brief editorial notes in 4(1), March 1979 to 7(1), July 1982.) In practice, contemporary history was dealt with in the broadest possible terms with a great variety of articles of a contemporary historical nature, as well as related to history, political science,

8 "Contemporary history" in K McLeish (ed.), *Bloomsbury guide to human thought* (London: Bloomsbury, 1993) – retrieved from <http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/bghf/contemporary_history/07>, accessed 16 March 2016. See in general also G Barraclough, *An introduction to contemporary history* (New York: Basic Books, 1964).

9 See, for example, R Guha, "The challenge of contemporary history", *Historia* 54(1), May 2009, pp. 112-128.

10 J den Hollander, "Contemporary history and the art of self-distancing", *History & Theory*, Theme Issue 50, December 2011, pp. 51-67.

11 P Hennessy, "The pleasures and pains of contemporary history", *History Today* 44(3), March 1994, pp. 16-17.

12 B Jewsewicky and VY Mudimbe, "Africans' memories and contemporary history of Africa", *History & Theory* 32(4), 1993, pp. 1-11.

13 See, for example, P Hennessy and A Seldon, "Contemporary history – now or never", *History Today* 36, April 1986, pp. 6-9; Y Bauer, "Contemporary history – some methodological problems", *History* 61(203), October 1976, pp. 333-343; J-W Müller, "European intellectual history as contemporary history", *Journal of Contemporary History* 46(3), July 2011, pp. 574-590; HS Hughes, "Is contemporary history real history?", *The American Scholar* 32(4), Autumn 1963, pp. 516-518, 520-522, 524-525; P Catterall, "What (if anything) is distinctive about contemporary history?", *Journal of Contemporary History* 32(4), October 1997, pp. 441-452; J Palmowski and KS Readman, "Speaking truth to power: Contemporary history in the twenty-first century", *Journal of Contemporary History* 46(3), July 2011, pp. 485-505. For books on contemporary history see, for example, B Brivati, J Buxton and A Seldon (eds), *The contemporary history handbook* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996); A Seldon (ed.), *Contemporary history: Practice and method* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988); J de Launay, *Major controversies of contemporary history* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1965).

etc., being published. On only two occasions were articles published that dealt with contemporary history from a theoretical point of view, namely those of Maritz Broodryk (on the state of contemporary history in South Africa) in December 1990¹⁴ and Pieter Coetzer (on the problems and value of contemporary historical research) in June 2009¹⁵ – the latter article based on his excellent inaugural address of 9 March 1994.

Taking into account the interest in contemporary history, a British *Journal of Contemporary History* was founded in 1966, with its editorial office (until 2005) at the Institute of Contemporary History and Wiener Library in London. Originally published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson, it is now (since 1972) published by Sage Publications. The journal is today (2016) still published, as a quarterly, peer-reviewed international journal, publishing articles and book reviews on post-1930 history, including social, economic, political, diplomatic, intellectual and cultural history. In 2016 the Editors were from the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA). Other contemporary history journals are *Contemporary European History* (with Editors from the UK and USA), which covers the history of Eastern and Western Europe (including the UK) from 1918 to the present (it was first published in 1992), and *Contemporary British History*, publishing articles (since 1996) on British society, culture, politics, foreign policy and economy in the period since 1945. But, the UFS's *JCH* is the only such journal on the African continent.

* * *

As has been indicated in the Introduction (*supra*), the *JCH* was established in 1975 as the mouthpiece of the University of the Orange Free State's Institute for Contemporary History. INCH published a small in-house journal called *Acta Diurna Historica* (1972-1980), but it contained only short articles of a popular nature. There was, consequently, the need for a fully-fledged academic journal, and thus the *JCH* was born.

With the demise of INCH in 1998, the *JCH* was taken over by the University of the Free State's Department of History, with that Department's head, Professor Leo Barnard, also becoming the new Editor of the *Journal*. Barnard had been on long leave since November 2006 (in the run-up to his retirement on 31 March 2008) and in his absence, Professor André Wessels acted as Departmental Chairperson;¹⁶ but Barnard continued to be the Editor of the *JCH* until 13 June 2007 when, unexpectedly, he informed Wessels telephonically that he was

14 M Broodryk, "Die stand van eietydse geskiedenis in die RSA", *Joernaal vir Eietydse Geskiedenis/Journal for Contemporary History* 15(3), December 1990, pp. 91-116.

15 P Coetzer, "Die probleme en waarde van eietydse historiese navorsing", *Joernaal vir Eietydse Geskiedenis/Journal for Contemporary History* 34(2), June 2009, pp. 220-234.

16 Wessels was acting Chairperson from 9 November 2006, then Chairperson from 1 April 2008, and was appointed Head of the Department of History, from 1 April 2014.

stepping down as Editor with immediate effect and that Wessels had to take over as Editor (with Barnard becoming a Deputy Editor). This matter was discussed and formalised during an Editorial Board meeting on 12 September 2007.¹⁷

Wessels inherited a journal that had a proud history stretching back more than 30 years, but there were several challenges that had to be addressed and in due course, new challenges arose. Believing that changes have to be made in an evolutionary way, and that all who are involved should take co-ownership of the changes, Wessels gradually implemented several technical changes, oversaw the design of a new cover, increased the number of Advisory Editors from two to six, expanded the number of Contributing Editors by including six academics from six overseas countries, and involved three new persons to assist with the day-to-day running of the *JCH*. He implemented a new administrative system for the *Journal* and attempted to lift the standard of the *JCH*.

In the course of 2013, Wessels indicated that, because he regarded seven years as a long period to serve as Editor, he would be stepping down as Editor not later than the end of 2014.¹⁸ He had no ambition to be Editor-for-Life! This gave the Editorial Board sufficient time to appoint a new Editor. The position was advertised and on 3 November 2014 the Editorial Board decided to appoint Professor Pieter Duvenage, the Head of the Department of Philosophy at the UFS, as the new *JCH* Editor.¹⁹ Duvenage's father, GDJ Duvenage (1925-2012) was a historian, and Pieter also has a keen interest in history; as a matter of fact, some of his publications have strong historical content.²⁰

2.1 The Editorial Board

Thus far, the *JCH* has had only five Editors: Professor Pieter Coetzer (1975-1981 and 1984-1998); Dr (later Professor) Kobus du Pisani (1982-1983); Professor Leo Barnard (1998-2007);²¹ Professor André Wessels (2007-2014); and Professor Pieter Duvenage (since 2015).²² Professor Coetzer holds a unique

- 17 A Wessels, Personal Document Collection (Bloemfontein), *Journal for Contemporary History* (file): Minutes of Editorial Board Meeting, 12 September 2007 (copy).
- 18 See, for example, A Wessels, Personal Document Collection (Bloemfontein), *Journal for Contemporary History* (file): Memorandum re *JCH*, 3 August 2013 (copy).
- 19 A Wessels, Personal Document Collection (Bloemfontein), *Journal for Contemporary History* (file): Minutes of Editorial Board Meeting, 3 November 2014 (copy).
- 20 See, for example, his article "Nie-eensgesindheid in eensgesindheid? Die verkiesing van Hendrik Verwoerd as eerste minister in 1958", *Journal for Contemporary History/Joernaal vir Eietydse Geskiedenis* 39(2), June 2014, pp. 1-18. See also "Vryheid, gelykheid en andersheid: oor die brose aard van demokrasie", *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe* 45(4), 2005, pp. 491-499; and his book *Afrikaanse filosofie: perspektiewe en dialoë* (Bloemfontein: Sun Press, 2016).
- 21 Professor Barnard passed away on 31 March 2009.
- 22 *Journal for Contemporary History/Joernaal vir Eietydse Geskiedenis* 40(2), December 2015, p. ii (preface by Pieter Coetzer).

distinction, namely that he has been involved uninterruptedly with the *JCH* right from its inception in 1975 (as Editorial Board member and Editor), and continues today (2016), more than 40 years later, as both a Contributing Editor and Manuscript Editor. If this is not a world record, then it is probably close to one!

The *JCH*'s first Editorial Board consisted of four members, all Afrikaans-speaking white males. By 1977 there were five Editorial members, all Afrikaans-speaking. Although one Board member would, from time to time, be replaced by another person, the number of Board members remained at five (and always only Afrikaans-speaking male persons) until 7(1), July 1982, when it was expanded to six, then seven in 7(2), December 1982 and eight in 8(1), July 1983 – still all Afrikaans-speaking white males. The new-look *JCH* 9(2), December 1984 (see also Section 2.3, *infra*) also brought about a new-look structure for the Editorial Board, with Professor Coetzer now indicated as Editor-in-Chief, Kobus du Pisani as Editorial Secretary, four persons (all Afrikaans-speaking professors) as Editorial Advisors (including a first-ever Editorial Board member from outside the UOFS), and Mrs Petro Victor as typist (the first woman to be officially recognised as a member of the Editorial team).

One or more changes took place in the late 1980s, but the next major change to the Editorial Board came about with the new-look 16(1), June 1991 edition, when the Board was henceforth structured in terms of an Editor (Pieter Coetzer), Deputy Editor (AH Marais), an Editorial Secretary and Linguistic Editor (Mrs Alta Coetzer), four Co-editors, four Contributing Editors (all non-UOFS staff members), six Consulting Editors (four non-UOFS), and a computer operator – all Afrikaans speakers, and only two female. In the course of the next few years, a few more changes took place (for example, two new Deputy Editors were in due course appointed), but to a large extent the Editorial Board's structure and its members stayed the same. With 23(2), December 1998, and with Leo Barnard the new Editor, several changes took place. André Wessels became one of the two Deputy Editors; there were no longer Co-editors or Consulting Editors; but the number of Contributing Editors was expanded from four to 16 (including the first-ever woman to serve on the Editorial Board proper, and the first ever person from overseas, as well as "non-whites"²³ were also included – an Asian person, a black person and two coloured persons. Thus, for the first time in 23 years, there were now also English-speaking (and "non-white") *JCH* Board members. Mrs Mitzi Cloete continued to be the computer operator, Mrs Alta Coetzer the Editorial Secretary, while she and Dr Annette Strauss were responsible for the editing of articles, including language. In 2005, Professor Heidi Hudson became one of the two Deputy Editors; that same year three additional Consulting Editors from abroad were added. In 2006 Chitja Twala became Advisory Editor. In the

23 When the term "non-white(s)" is used out of necessity, no negative connotation is implied. This also applies when, again out of necessity (for example here and in Section 4, *infra*), references are made to race groups.

following nine years a number of additional Advisory Editors and Contributing Editors were added to the Editorial Board, and the Board continues to evolve.

From 2012 until 2014, the Secretary of the Department of History, Mrs Ina Malan, was involved with the *JCH* as Secretary, over and above her other work in the Department of History. Since 2012, Mrs Izette Bredenkamp has been involved with the *Journal* as one of the Editorial Assistants, and since 2014 as Editorial Manager, providing indispensable editorial and other assistance.

Over and above Professor Pieter Coetzer, who has been involved with the *JCH* ever since its inception in 1975, his wife, Mrs Alta Coetzer, is the person with the second longest association with the *Journal*, namely since 1988; for example, as Editorial Secretary, language editor and general editorial assistant. And then there is Mrs Mitzi Cloete who worked for the *JCH* as typist and later as computer operator (1988-2015).

Especially in the course of the past 20 years, the members of the Editorial Board have been selected with great care, keeping in mind the issue of the representivity of designated groups in a democratic post-1994 South Africa, as well as academic qualifications, publication track record, expertise, and academic stature in general. In 2005, 11 of the 15 Editorial Board members were present or former heads of academic departments at universities, either in South Africa or abroad. Most of the Board members were and are from History, Political Science and/or International Relations departments, and most of them also serve (or have served) on the editorial boards of other academic journals.

For much of its first 40 years, the *JCH* has published articles that have been subjected to a double blind peer review process. Great care has been taken to ensure that articles are evaluated in a proper and (nationally and internationally) acceptable way. Of the 24 articles that were received for the June 2012 edition, 11 (45,8%) were rejected; seven (33,3%) out of 21 for the June 2013 edition, and five (33,3%) out of 15 for the June 2015 edition.²⁴ In the course of the past ten years, it has seldom happened that no articles received for a particular edition were rejected. In 2012 a total of 44 peer reviewers were used; in 2013 – 71, and in 2014 – 60.²⁵

2.2 Publishers

To publish an accredited, academic journal is very expensive, and in the past 40 years, the *JCH*'s Editorial staff has been privileged to receive an annual subsidy from the UOFS/UFS to help cover the costs of producing the journal. Initially, the *Journal* was published using the funds of the Institute for Contemporary History.²⁶ Page fees and subscription fees have also assisted the various Editors

24 ASSAf questionnaire to editors of journals being peer reviewed [2015], pp. 3-5.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

26 Information supplied by Professor Pieter Coetzer, 16 March 2016.

to ensure that the *Journal* has never been in financial difficulties. However, that has also only been possible because in the course of so many years, academic and support staff have been willing to do work in the interest of the *JCH* without receiving additional remuneration, and because those who were paid on an ad hoc basis were prepared to do the work for relatively low remuneration. Linking the *JCH* to a university has its advantages, but there are also frustrations; for example, in 2013, in accordance with the UFS's policy with regard to the employment of people over 60 years of age, the contract of one of the *Journal's* kingpins was not renewed, and since then there has, from time to time, been uncertainty about the remuneration of people who do ad hoc work for the *JCH*.

From 1975 to June 1999 the *JCH* was printed by University [of the Orange Free State] Press; from the December 1999 edition by Xerox on the UOFS/UFS campus; and from June 2008 by Bytes Document Solutions on the UFS campus. Since 2009 Sun Media Bloemfontein has been responsible for the production of the *Journal*. In 1975 and 1976, one edition of the *JCH* was published per annum. From 1977 to 1984 two editions of the *Journal* were published annually; then two or three per year, and since 1991 two editions annually, plus an additional third edition (special edition) from time to time, for example in September 1994, May 2002, February 2009 and December 2012. Subscribers (individuals and institutions) now (2016) amount to just more than a hundred in approximately 15 countries. Some individuals also receive free copies.²⁷

By the end of 2015 the print run of the *Journal* was 200 copies. From 8(1), July 1983, the *JCH* editions had ISBN numbers (each one a new number); 11(1), April 1986 had both an ISBN number, as well as an ISSN number 02582422 – and the latter ISSN number has been kept ever since.

2.3 Format and technical matters

The first six editions of the *Journal* (1, [1975]; 2 [1976]; 3(1) and 3(2), 1977 and 3(1) and 3(2), 1978) were printed in slightly smaller than A5 format (146x203mm) – with slight variations between editions – with a dark-red cover, and with the title, *Joernaal vir Eietydse Geskiedenis/Journal for Contemporary History/Journal für Zeitgeschichte* on the cover and on the title page of editions 1 and 2; but as from 2(1) the title changed to *Joernaal vir Eietydse Geskiedenis en Internasionale Verhoudinge/Journal for Contemporary History and International Relations* – and now with a somewhat rudimentary drawing of the African continent (and South Africa) on the cover. Volume 4, Number 1 of March 1979 introduced the reader to a much more professional-looking *JCH*, with a properly-designed dark-blue cover, and in a larger format (155x247mm). The title henceforth also reverted to *Joernaal vir Eietydse Geskiedenis/Journal for Contemporary History*; i.e.

27 Information supplied by Ms Izette Bredenkamp, 16 March 2016.

the *International Relations* was dropped, albeit that articles that deal with international relations topics would still be published from time to time.

The cover design of 6(1), July 1981 to 8(2), December 1983 stayed as previously, but the background colour was now yellow; and light-blue in 9(1), July 1984. From 9(2), December 1984 until 15(3), December 1990 the design on the cover remained, but the *JCH*'s format reverted to more or less A5 size, although the colour of the cover changed from time to time; for example, grey in 9(2), December 1984, light-blue in 10(1), April 1985, pink in 10(2), August 1985 – and the same colours, plus light-green and light-brown, used alternatively until 15(3), December 1990.

The new decade brought a new-look *JCH*: from 16(1), June 1991 until 19(1), June 1994, the format was still A5, but the cover a very light-blue (with slight changes to the shade from time to time), and there was a new (and simpler) cover design, with no illustrations, but for the first time the crest of the UOFS appeared on the cover. This format and cover also stayed the same for the period September 1994 to December 1998, but with the cover now consistently a somewhat darker light-blue. From 24(1), June 1999 until 35(3), December 2010, the *JCH* sported a new cover design (including a sketch of the tower of the UFS's main building), on a cover of white and (various shades) of grey – except for six special editions that appeared in this period, each with a unique cover design; for example 27(2), May 2002, which was a special edition on the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). From 36(1), June 2011 to the present-day (2016), another new cover design has been in use, including the latest UFS crest. From the above, it is clear that the physical look of the *Journal* changed from time to time, and evolved to its present very professional look and outlay.

The number of pages and the number of articles in an edition of the *Journal* have varied throughout its history; for example 32 pages (three articles) in No 1[1975]; 111 pages (three articles, two book reviews) in 3(2), September 1978; 74 pages (three articles) in 5(1), March 1980; 103 pages (four articles, two book reviews) in 8(1), July 1983; 149 pages (four articles, an "actuality column" and a list of previously-published articles in the *JCH*) in 9(2), December 1984; 218 pages (seven articles, a "current affairs column", one book review and a list of previously-published articles) in 12(2), August 1987; 154 pages (six articles, a book review and a list of previously-published articles) in 15(3), December 1990; 140 pages (seven articles, one book review and a list of previously-published articles) in June 1993; 241 pages (eight articles and a list of previously-published articles) in June 1994; 335 pages (a special edition on the Republic of South Africa's first-ever, truly democratic elections of April 1994; with nine articles and a list of previously-published articles) in 19(2), September 1994; 136 pages (seven articles and a list of previously-published articles) in June 1999; 322 pages (14 articles and three book reviews) in 38(1), June 2013 and 219 pages (ten articles) in 40(2), December 2015.

Before 1985, a *JCH* seldom had more than 100 pages; until 1990 seldom more than 150 pages; until September 2006 seldom more than 200 pages; and since then mostly more than 200 pages – with the December 2006 special edition on the so-called Border War the most comprehensive *Journal* thus far (most pages – 399; and most articles – 19). The practice of including a list of previously-published articles in every edition of the *JCH*, which commenced in 8(2), December 1983, was discontinued as from 24(2), December 1999 because it increasingly took up too much space (with concomitant production cost implications). Since then, this list has only been published sporadically; for example, the last time (in the period under discussion) in 36(31), December 2011.

From 4(1), March 1979 to 9(1), July 1984 each article was accompanied by a black-and-white photo of the author, together with a brief curriculum vitae. Very few other illustrations have ever been included, the exceptions being a few photographs on one occasion, and graphs, sketches and maps have also sometimes been included. Both the Harvard and Chicago methods of referencing can be used by authors who wish to publish in the *JCH*.

3. THEMES AND TRENDS

From 1975 to 2015, a total of 764 articles have been published in 94 editions of the *JCH* (i.e. on average 8,1 articles per edition). The 94 editions include 15 648 pages containing articles; i.e. the average article is 20,5 pages long. The three articles in the *Journal's* first edition, in 1975, were all written by historians from abroad, and dealt with "The politics of partition in southern Africa" (R Hyam, UK); "From conference to meeting: the 'talk shop' of the Commonwealth 1887-1973" (DW Harkness), and a first (and last) article in German, namely "Kaiser Karl I. (1887-1922)" (L Jedlicka, Austria). Professor Ockie Geyser, Director of the Institute for Contemporary History, under whose guidance the *JCH* was established, used his overseas contacts to ensure that several articles written by experts from abroad, could be published. From 9(2), December 1984 until 12(3), December 1987, the *JCH* also contained, over and above conventional articles, a "current affairs column" or "actuality notes", comprising short articles, etc. – in total comprising 581 pages; but these "articles" and their respective authors have not been taken into consideration when the statistical analysis of the articles, authors and themes was done for this commemorative article on the *JCH's* first 40 years.

In the course of 40 years, articles covering a great variety of topics/themes have been published in the *JCH*. These include articles of a more traditional, contemporary historical nature, for example JA du Pisani, "B.J. Vorster en Afrikanerverdeeldheid, 1966-1970: 'n oorsig van die verlig-verkramptstryd" in 11(2), August 1986; articles of a political science nature, for example A Duvenage, "Politieke verval as 'n patroon van politieke verandering: 'n teoreties-verkennende perspektief" in 28(3), December 2003; articles that deal with

international relations, for example PW Coetzer, M Broodryk and JA du Pisani, "Relations between South Africa and the Soviet Bloc" in 16(2), December 1991; historiographical articles, for example Ian van der Waag and Deon Visser, "War, popular memory and the South African literature of the Angolan conflict" in 34(1), February 2009; methodological, theoretical and/or philosophical articles, for example Danie Strauss, "The reformational legacy within political theory" in 35(2), September 2010; military history, for example André Wessels, "The South African Navy during the years of conflict in southern Africa, 1966-1989" in 31(3), December 2006; peacekeeping, for example Theo Neethling, "The SANDF as an instrument for peacekeeping in Africa: critical analysis of three main challenges" in 31(1) June 2011; economic in nature, for example ES van Eeden, "South Africa in the minds and operations of the SA-American business world, 1980-1993 – a preliminary survey" in 20(1), June 1995; health matters, for example Mark Nyandoro, "Historical overview of the cholera outbreak in Zimbabwe (2008-2009)" in 36(1), June 2011 (one of only a few articles that have dealt with issues outside the borders of South Africa); legal issues, for example Angelique Harsant and Willem Ellis, "One size does not fit all: a rethink of international law mechanisms in the case of the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda" in 33(2), September 2008; and articles of an interdisciplinary nature, for example Henning Melbar, "Faith as politics – and politics as faith: Beyers Naudé and Dag Hammarskjöld" in 40(2), December 2015.

There have been articles on general elections, for example SL Barnard, "The election campaign in the general election in South Africa in 1994" in 19(2), September 1994; education, for example Chitja Twala, "Race and ethnicity in the teaching of History: challenges to History in the new dispensation" in 30(2), September 2005; land issues, for example Piet Erasmus, "New identities and old perceptions: Opperman's Grounds land restitution" in 3(2), September 2006; sport, for example Cobus Rademeyer, "No normal sport in an abnormal society – sports isolation and the struggle against apartheid in South African sport, 1980-1992" in 25(1), June 2000; crime, for example PW Coetzer, "Misdaad – persepsie of realiteit? President Thabo Mbeki en sy hantering van misdaad in 2006" in 32(2), December 2007; and gender issues, for example Heidi Hudson, "Women's security needs versus feminist agenda? Implication of the security-environment-gender nexus" in 26(1), June 2001.

From its inception "contemporary history" has been interpreted in the broadest sense of the word by the *JCH*'s Editorial Board, and articles of political science and international relations nature have always been welcome. The first Political Science articles were published in 2(1), March 1977 (two out of four articles), and four of the five articles published in 2(2), September 1977 were written by Political Scientists. Since then, only a few *JCH* editions have not contained articles of a Political Science nature, for example 15(2), October 1990. It was consequently logical that Political Scientists were soon included on

the Editorial Board, and that since 19(3), December 1994 a Political Scientist has been one of the Deputy Editors. Political Scientists continue to form part of the Editorial Board. In the course of the past decade, Political Science (in the broadest sense) articles continue to play an almost dominant role in the *Journal*; for example, five articles out of 11 in 31(1), June 2006, seven out of nine in 33(2), September 2008 and six out of ten in 35(2), September 2010. Of the articles 764 that have thus far been published in the *JCH*, approximately 260 (i.e. about 34%) have been of a Political Science nature.

Initially, *JCH* articles dealt with any twentieth-century history or political science topic. Most of the articles thus far published in the *JCH* have been in line with the "Instructions to authors" of the *Journal* – which by 2015 have referred to the *JCH* as a journal "which publishes academically outstanding articles of a contemporary historical or political nature in both English and Afrikaans. Only articles dealing with topics on sub-Saharan Africa since 1945 will be considered". Furthermore, it is also indicated that: "Sometimes a number of related articles are published in a special edition which may include articles on topics 1945."²⁸

In the course of the past 40 years, nine special editions of the *JCH* have been published, all of them since 1994. These issue-driven special editions mostly deal with a particular theme that is of significant contemporary importance; for example, 19(4), September 1994 dealt with the watershed April 1994 general election that put South Africa on the road to democracy; 25(2), December 2000, 27(2), May 2002 and 36(2), September 2011 dealt with the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 to 1902, a conflict that set in motion a train of events which, to a large extent, determined the course that twentieth-century South African history would take; and 33(2), September 2008 which dealt with the theme "Politics and transformation in a global and local context."

Although there are *Journal* articles that still deal with topics going back to the 1950s and even to the 1940s, the issues of a particular phase or period in South Africa's history tend to find their way into the *JCH*; for example, as has already been mentioned, 19(4), September 1994 dealt with the April 1994 election. Other examples are an article on crime, in 33(3), December 2008; the 52nd conference of the African National Congress (in 2007), in 33(3), December 2008; piracy on the African east coast, in 35(2), September 2010; the politics of water in 37(1), June 2012; the public transport system in Nelson Mandela Bay, in 31(1), June 2012; and patterns of ownership and labour unrest within the South African mining sector, in 40(2), December 2015.

It would be unfair to identify certain specific articles as being of a particular cutting edge nature, implying that others are not. The very fact that many of the articles in the *Journal* deal with present-day issues, mean that they are in a certain sense "cutting edge". Furthermore, it should be mentioned that the *JCH*'s

28 *Journal for Contemporary History/Joernaal vir Eietydse Geskiedenis* 40(2), December 2015, p. 220.

Editorial Boards have never shied away from publishing articles that could be regarded as controversial. But, once again, it would be unfair to identify specific examples in this regard. After all, pacifists will, for example, most probably regard articles that deal with military topics (strategy, tactics, battles, such as Cuito Cuanavale) as controversial and problematic, while, for military historians and other people interested in military matters, it would be fascinating to read.

As has already been indicated, only 15 prefaces have thus far been included in the *JCH*, most of them in special editions. The Editorial Board could consider the possibility of including a preface in every edition of the *Journal* – as is the practice in certain South African journals, for example, *New Contree* and (since recently), *Scientia Militaria: South African Journal of Military Studies*.

4. THE AUTHORS

A total of 331 authors have thus far published a total of 764 articles in the *JCH*: 616 single-author articles, 135 articles with two authors, 12 articles with three authors, and one article with four authors – in 38(2), December 2013. The first co-authored article was published in 13(1), June 1988. The last time that a *Journal* had no co-authored articles was in 29(3), December 2004. Since then more and more articles have two (or more) authors.

Thus far, most authors have been white males (some 55%), white women made up approximately 25% of the authors; black people some 14%, coloured people some 3%, and Asian people also about 3%. Most of the authors (some 88%) are South Africans, with some 12% from Europe, the USA, and (a few) from Africa north of the Limpopo River. It is clear that a concerted effort should be made to attract more authors from outside South Africa's borders, especially from other African countries. The first article written by a woman was published in 8(1), July 1983; the first article by a black person was published in 10(3), December 1985; by an Asian person in 18(1), June 1993; and by a coloured person in 22(1), June 1997. The largest number of "non-white" authors in any *JCH* edition thus far, has been seven out of sixteen in 37(1), June 2012.

Over and above the single article written in German (in the *JCH*'s first edition, 1975), and three articles written in Dutch (25(2), December 2000 – two articles; and 27(2), May 2002 – one article), 432 (57,1%) of the articles have been written in English and 328 (42,9%) in Afrikaans. The *JCH*'s first two editions contained only English (and one German) articles. Until 1982, most of the articles were in English and several authors were affiliated to overseas universities and other institutions. In the later eighties and early 1990s most articles were written in Afrikaans, but in due course, more and more articles written in English were published but very few submitted by overseas scholars. In 12(2), August 1987, there were six articles in Afrikaans and one in English; in 21(1), June 1996, five in Afrikaans and four in English; in 31(2), September 2006, six in Afrikaans

and six in English; and in 40(2), December 2015, none in Afrikaans and ten in English. It is noteworthy that as early as 4(1), March 1979, the Editorial Board (in an editorial note) indicated that more English articles would be published in an effort to enhance the impact of the *JCH*. After the *JCH*'s first two editions contained no articles in Afrikaans, only five other editions have not contained any Afrikaans articles, namely 19(2), September 1994; 22(2), December 1997; 33(2), September 2008; 38(2), December 2013, and 40(2), December 2015. If all 94 editions of the *Journal* are scrutinised, it is clear that there is a tendency towards submitting and publishing more articles that are written in English. But, thus far, language has never been an issue in the *JCH*, and hopefully it never will be.

The overwhelming majority (more than 80%) of authors are affiliated to South African universities. Other authors include historians affiliated to museums, journalists, and politicians – including PW Botha (2(2), September 1977) and Jaap Marais (10(3), December 1985). Most of the university authors are historians or political scientists. Others include theologians, anthropologists, sociologists, and economists. Most of South Africa's universities have been represented in the *JCH*, with the most number of articles written by UOFS/UFS staff members.

In the period December 2007 to June 2013, 16 editions of the *JCH* were published, including six special editions. Sometimes more than 50% of the articles published in the ordinary (i.e. not special) editions of the *Journal*, were of a Political Science (in the broadest possible terms) nature. In the above-mentioned 16 editions, a total of 177 articles were published, including 86 by UFS staff members (i.e. 48,6% were "in-house"). These academics came from, *inter alia*, the Departments of History, Political Science (later Political Studies and Governance), and Philosophy, the Centre for Africa Studies (all in the Faculty of the Humanities), as well as from the UFS's Faculty of Law. The then Editor believed that the large number of UFS authors publishing in the *Journal* could be regarded as problematic, and that ideally, not more than 30% of published articles should be "in-house", something which by 2012 he had achieved.

5. BOOK REVIEWS

In the course of its first 40 years of existence, 77 book reviews have been published in the *JCH* – 53 (68,8%) in English and 24 (31,2%) in Afrikaans. (Since 36(1), June 2011, 21 reviews have been published.) The book reviews comprise a total of approximately 246 pages; i.e. on average a *JCH* book review is just more than three pages long. The first-ever review, appeared in the very first edition of the *JCH* in 1975 – Jean van der Poel's *Selections from the Smuts papers* (volumes 5-7), reviewed by Professor Ockie Geyser. In an editorial note in 6(1), July 1981, the Editorial Board asked for more book reviews to be submitted, but it did not materialise; as a matter of fact, from 11(3), December 1986 until

15(2), October 1990, no book reviews were included. From 36(1), June 2011 until 40(1), June 2015, there was at least one book review in every *Journal*.

In light of the fact that on average less than one book review has appeared in the 94 editions of the *Journal*, it is clear that the Editorial Board should endeavour to commission more such reviews. After all, the 0,82, book reviews on average per *JCH* edition does not compare well with the average of 4,75 book reviews per edition of the *South African Historical Journal* for the period March 2010 to December 2015²⁹ and on average 8,6 book reviews in *Historia* for the period May 2007 to November 2011.³⁰

The books that have thus far been reviewed in the *JCH* are mostly books of a contemporary political history, political science or international relations nature, but also include reviews of biographies. Ideally, reviews of books written in English should be written in English (not in Afrikaans) and books written in Afrikaans should be reviewed in Afrikaans (or English).

The increase in book prices, mainly due to the falling value of the South African currency, has meant that publishers have gradually sent out fewer complementary copies of books to journals to be reviewed. However, the *JCH*'s Editorial Board should encourage academics to submit book reviews written on own initiative (after consulting the Editor).

Thus far, only two review articles have been published in the *Journal*, namely in 15(1), June 1990 and in 16(1), June 1991. It is thus recommended that, as far as possible, more review articles be included in the *JCH*.

6. CONCLUDING PERSPECTIVES

Throughout its 40-year history, the *JCH* has indeed succeeded in making a worthwhile contribution to the historical discourse by publishing academically outstanding articles in the human sciences, in particular for example, contemporary history (including political, constitutional, economic and military history), Political Science/Studies and Governance, the environmental sciences, Geography, and Anthropology. Only articles dealing with topics on sub-Saharan Africa and in particular South Africa since 1945 are considered, as well as review articles and book reviews. Thus far, on nine occasions, a number of related articles have been published in a special edition which may also include articles on topics before 1945.

The *Journal* is the only one of its kind in South Africa, as well as on the African continent, and one of only a few in the world. Its cutting-edge articles are often consulted by academics, students and other researchers in South Africa and abroad, and used in the writing of Master's and Doctoral theses, academic

29 See *South African Historical Journal* 62(1), March 2010-67(4), December 2015.

30 See *Historia* 52(1), May 2007-56(2), November 2011. A total of 86 book reviews in ten editions of this journal.

and other publications. In 1991 the *JCH* received accreditation as an academic journal from the South African Department of Higher Education.³¹ In accordance with this department's guidelines for accredited, peer-reviewed academic journals, the *JCH* has always strived to disseminate high-quality research findings in support of high-level teaching, learning, and research. Many of its articles have shed light on events of the recent past. Throughout its history the *Journal* has also appeared regularly, albeit sometimes not on time, because of various factors, such as the late completion of evaluation reports by referees, or because printers could not deliver copies on time (for example, because of work that had piled up). One would like to believe that the *JCH* has indeed also acted as a stimulus for other researchers to either explore new fields of contemporary history (and related) topics, or to continue with the research in this regard which they were already doing. The *Journal* has also made a noteworthy contribution to the University of the Free State's research output.

The publication of the first edition of the *JCH* in 1975 heralded a new era in the publication of contemporary history findings in South Africa. As the *Journal* developed, it also stimulated research with regard to contemporary history in South Africa. In the course of its first 40 years of existence, the *JCH* has created the opportunity for established and often well-known and influential historians, political scientists, as well as scholars from many other academic fields (from the UFS, other South African universities, and from abroad), to publish their research findings and to disseminate it to fellow researchers and others across the globe. The *Journal* has also created opportunities for young staff members to publish their first-ever articles. As one of only a few accredited academic journals produced by the UFS, the *JCH* has also played a role in enhancing the UFS's reputation as an academic institution. (Other UFS-published accredited journals include *Acta Academica* (established 1969), *Acta Theologica* (1989),³² *Communitas* (1994), *Journal for Juridical Sciences* (1976) and *Town and Regional Planning* (2000).³³)

To run the day-to-day management and administration of an accredited academic journal with an Editor who does the work over and above his/her normal academic activities, and with support staff who are often retired and are remunerated on an ad hoc basis, can be risky. It is also unfair to expect part-time editors and other editorial staff members to spend valuable academic time editing and proof-reading the manuscripts that are sent to a journal, such as the *JCH*; often, their own research suffers accordingly. The ideal is that such a journal should be professionalised in the sense that it should have a full-time Executive Editor, who, ideally, should be able to do the day-to-day management and

31 *Journal for Contemporary History/Joernaal vir Eietydse Geskiedenis* 40(2), December 2015, p. ii (preface by Pieter Coetzer).

32 Earlier (since established in 1981) known as *Fax Theologica*.

33 Previously published by other institutions.

administration of the journal, as well as the language-editing and proofreading of the completed journal manuscripts. But that has financial implications.

When the UOFS was established in 1904, English was the language of instruction. From 1911 a subject was also taught in Dutch, with more and more lectures gradually taught in Dutch and then later in Afrikaans, when Afrikaans replaced Dutch as one of the country's two official languages in 1925. From 1948 Afrikaans was the language of instruction at the UOFS, and from 1993 classes were presented according to a parallel-medium language policy; i.e. lectures were provided (in separate classes) in Afrikaans and in English.³⁴ On 11 March 2016 the Council of the UFS approved a new language policy, which, *inter alia*, states that from 2017 English will become the UFS's language of administration and will be phased in as the primary medium of instruction at undergraduate and postgraduate level, but that equal esteem will be accorded to all official languages of South Africa, and that there will be support for the development of multilingualism.³⁵ Hopefully the *JCH* will, in this new language context (should it indeed be successfully implemented), be able to continue to publish articles in both English and Afrikaans; in due course, perhaps even in other African languages, such as Sesotho and isiZulu. Neither the *JCH* nor the UFS can afford to lose quality articles.

The following are ideals that the *JCH*'s Editorial Board in future could strive for: ISI accreditation; more articles from academics (and others) working at other African and overseas universities; more articles on African countries other than South Africa, including more articles on Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia, Botswana, Angola, Mozambique, Kenya and Malawi; more book reviews and review articles; a pay-on-demand online version of the *Journal*, parallel to the hard-copy editions. (For some (many?) people, it will be a sad day if properly-bound, hard-copy editions of the *JCH* will no longer be available.) Furthermore, consideration could be given to the inclusion of articles on a specific topic in which opposite views are expressed – in an effort to draw more attention to the *JCH*. This is something that could also be done with special editions. Ideally, the *Journal*'s articles should be indexed by, for example, IBSS, Google Scholar and/or Scopus; the Editorial Board should consider joining the evolving SciELO SA platform;³⁶ and the *Journal*'s impact factor should also be determined.

34 *From grey to gold*, pp. 58-60, 126-129.

35 See, for example, *Volksblad*, 12 March 2016, p. 2.

36 The Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) SA is South Africa's premier open-access (free to access and free to publish) searchable full-text journal database in service of the South African research community. The database covers a selected collection of peer-reviewed South African scholarly journals and forms an integral part of the SciELO Brazil Project. SciELO SA is managed by the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), funded by the South African Department of Science and Technology, and endorsed by the South African Department of Higher Education and Training. See <<http://www.scielo.org.za>>, accessed 16 March 2016.

The *JCH* complies with the basic, internationally acceptable standards for academic journals and has not been given its status as a fully-fledged national accredited refereed journal without reason. The *Journal* has a proud history stretching back all the way to 1975, and will hopefully continue to serve the academic community both in South Africa and abroad.