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Looking Back, Looking Forward

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Looking Back, Looking Forward

Beginning with this issue, I've stepped down as editor of *Maine Policy Review*. It's hard to believe that I've been with the journal for 14 years, 2002–2008 as managing editor and 2008–2016 as editor. When *MPR* editor Kathy Hunt left the Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center, I was asked to assume the editorship. I said I'd fill in for a couple of years until a more permanent arrangement could be made. Eight years later (how time flies!) we have now made the transition to a new editorial structure. Barbara Harrity has moved from managing editor to editor. Linda Silka assumes the newly created role of executive editor, with a primary focus on outreach and planning the journal's content. I am happy to leave the journal in their capable hands.

Maine Policy Review has undergone a number of changes since I've been associated with it, including an increased emphasis on special issues devoted to single broad topics and, perhaps most important, since early 2013 making all issues available electronically through the University of Maine Digital Commons site. The latter innovation has introduced *MPR* to a much broader readership nationally and internationally. Print circulation remains at about 2,600, but more than 3,000 articles monthly are downloaded from Digital Commons.

Over the past 14 years, the content of the journal has evolved as policy concerns changed, but there is also continuity in topics that reflect persistent concerns in the state. Maine's changing demographics, labor force, and educational attainment have been themes throughout my tenure at *MPR*. It is not

surprising that we have had two special issues devoted to aging, first in 2003 and again in 2015. The loss of natural-resource-based industries and manufacturing and its impact on the economies and well-being of residents in Maine's rural rim counties has been another persistent theme. In 2007, a special issue was devoted to the future of Maine's North Woods. With the near-demise of pulp and paper mills now, the wood products, forest land, and rural economies remain as topics of concern. Tourism, Maine's largest industry, has received a fair amount of attention, often in discussions of potential economic development in declining rural regions. Health care and health problems such as substance abuse have been the subject of a number of articles over the years. I would anticipate this to be a growing area of emphasis given what is happening both locally and nationally. Climate change and energy are emerging arenas of urgent policy concern that *MPR* has covered in the past, including a special issue in 2008. Plans are in the works for more on this in the near future.

While *MPR* to some degree reflects current policy concerns, we have also tried to introduce topics that aren't necessarily on the front burner or of immediate legislative concern. Broadening reader horizons to emergent policy areas or to new ways of looking at old ones can be as important as dealing with the problem of the day. Several of our special issues have had this in mind: early childhood (2009); Maine's food system (2011); sustainability (2012); libraries and information (2013); innovation (2014); and humanities and policy (2015).

I came to work on *MPR* by happenstance and with no formal training or background in editing. I have learned so much on so many varied topics. I have met and worked with so many thoughtful and creative people, including the guest editors for our special issues. I feel proud to have played a part in maintaining *Maine Policy Review's* reputation as a nonpartisan source of objective information and analysis of policy issues relevant to Maine and its people. Dr. Isabel Gordon, my high school AP English teacher, would be shocked to know what I've done; she despaired that I would ever be able to write at the college level.



Maybe making me rewrite all those essays multiple times paid off...