

Editors' Introduction

Volume 2, Issue 2

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Published April 13, 2022

<https://doi.org/10.18061/jpac.v2i2.8905>

Two years into the global pandemic, many of us find it hard to confidently measure how time is passing or when certain things happened. In that light, it seems long ago that the first issue of the *Journal of Plain Anabaptist Communities* was published, in summer 2020, though only 18 months have passed. The publication of this fourth issue is an opportune time to look back and consider what topics have been of most interest to readers since The Ohio State University Libraries began hosting an Amish studies journal in 2013. OSU Libraries provided the technical and editorial support for the *Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies* before that journal left for another institution and was succeeded at OSU by *JPAC*. OSU Libraries' user data for the first six volumes of *JPAS*, still housed at Ohio State, and the first three issues of *JPAC* cover 15 issues and 96 articles, research notes, fieldwork and reflections, and book reviews about various Anabaptist groups.¹

Altogether, readers viewed or downloaded articles 199,754 times as of December 31, 2021. However, 40,150 of those views/downloads (slightly more than one-fifth of the total) were of a single article, "The Amish Population: County Estimates and Settlement Patterns," that was highlighted in a Huffington Post news article (https://www.huffpost.com/entry/amish-population_n_6145336) in 2014. Excluding this statistical outlier brings the total number of downloads and views to 159,604, which provides a more realistic baseline for assessing the popularity of topic categories. We sorted articles into 10 categories, a process that was admittedly somewhat arbitrary since many manuscripts could be placed, quite easily, into more than one.

¹ To access the six volumes of the OSU-produced *JAPAS*, go to <https://kb.osu.edu/handle/1811/54888>.



A set of 12 articles that we labeled “Culture, community and society” collectively accounted for the largest number of downloads and views (31,758), or 19.0% of the total. These articles range from outsider perceptions of the Amish to how images of the Amish are used in political ads to specific groups, such as the examination of the love feast as observed by the Old German Baptist Brethren.

The second most frequently viewed group of articles were those concerned with population studies (minus the outlier noted above), with 28,583 downloads and views (17.9%). Counting the outlier, there were 15 published manuscripts in this category, including a *JAPAS* article on the occupational patterns of the Amish in Wisconsin and a *JPAC* study of continuity and change in the preferred months and days for weddings in the Greater Holmes County settlement. What would a journal of Plain community life be without articles, research notes, and reviews about the history of Anabaptist groups? The 13 historical articles and research notes in this third category account for 16.5% (26,336) of all downloads and views.

There are 15 published manuscripts about various health and medicine topics. This category is ranked fourth in frequency with 16,025 downloads and views (10.0%). Recent issues of *JPAC* have included articles related to COVID-19 and vaccinations. These essays recall earlier articles about Anabaptist groups and health care, including topics such as preference for alternative remedies and a reluctance to rely solely on modern medicine. Close behind health and medicine is a cluster of seven articles that focused on the economy, including a recent article about the challenges of dairy farming and an earlier study of workarounds in the use of technology by Amish businesses. These economic articles rank fifth in frequency of downloads and views (15,610), which is 9.8% of the total.

The sixth most popular category for downloads and views are reviews. There have been 13 in all, some of a single book and others of a cluster of related books and reports. Other reviews were in the format of an “author meets critics” session at a professional society meeting. This sixth category includes 13,883 downloads and views (8.7%). Seven articles related to education comprise the seventh most regularly accessed category, garnering 10,894 downloads and views (6.8%). The topics here center on descriptions of schooling in various Anabaptist groups, from Hutterites to the Old Order Amish.

The final three categories have both fewer published submissions and fewer downloads and views, but nonetheless represent important areas of scholarship. In order of frequency, they are: buggy and road safety with five articles (6,138 downloads and views; 3.8%), theory and method with six manuscripts (5,478; 3.43%), and Anabaptist literature with three titles (4,899; 3.1%).

This brief statistical review of scholarly publication on Plain communities published by OSU Libraries shows both the diversity of subject matter and the interests of readers. It certainly represents our hope for the future of *JPAC* and for scholarly publication on Plain groups more broadly. May the current issue of *JPAC* contribute to that goal.

The lead article for this issue is an interpretation of the early history of the Amish in the Holmes County, Ohio, area by Marcus Yoder, director of the Amish & Mennonite Heritage Center in Berlin, Ohio. There follows a thoughtful discussion of the complex issues involved when

considering the role of culture in assessing a criminal defendant's competence to stand trial when the defendant hails from a Plain Anabaptist group. The next three articles are about health and medicine, one of the most popular categories, as noted above. The three deal with perceived health care needs from two new Amish communities in New York, Amish perceptions about infant care screening in a Kentucky Amish settlement, and from the same area in the Bluegrass state, a preliminary study of attitudes about the use of CBD products. The final article is a population study examining rates of twinning in the Greater Holmes County Amish settlement. Volume 2, issue 2 closes with two reviews, a biography of Jakob Ammann, written and reviewed here by Plain Anabaptist church members, and *What the Amish Teach Us*, a set of reflective essays by sociologist Donald B. Kraybill.

This issue of the journal was delayed in its publication due to a number of platform upgrades that took place at the Ohio State University Libraries during February and March, system changes that resulted in helpful improvements. We remain grateful for the support that the OSU Libraries provides for academic scholarship.

JPAC is dedicated to publishing both empirical and theoretical work related to Plain Anabaptist communities, including, among others, the Amish, conservative Mennonites, Amish-Mennonites, Apostolic Christians, Brethren, Bruderhof, and Hutterites. *JPAC* articles may include emerging issues associated with Plain Anabaptist communities, diverse theoretical perspectives, and methodological approaches to the study of Plain Anabaptist groups, and significant research findings about Plain Anabaptist populations.

The *Journal of Plain Anabaptist Communities* is a jointly sponsored journal of the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown College in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, the Amish & Mennonite Heritage Center in Berlin, Ohio, and The Ohio State University Libraries.

JPAC's predecessor at OSU was the *Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies (JAPAS)*. Articles from volumes 1–6 of *JAPAS* can still be accessed, free of charge, in the Knowledge Bank of the OSU Libraries: <https://kb.osu.edu/handle/1811/54888>.

If you would like to discuss ideas for manuscripts for possible publication in the journal, please contact Joe Donnermeyer (donnermeyer.1@gmail.com) or Steve Nolt (nolts@etown.edu). Visit <https://plainanabaptistjournal.org/about> to access additional detail about *JPAC*, including author guidelines. As these guidelines state: "Submissions should be in Microsoft Word, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins, left justification only, and no headers or footers." We allow prospective authors to select from one of two styles for citations: the American Psychological Association (APA) style (7th edition) and the Chicago Manual of Style (17th edition). In this manner, we recognize the diversity of backgrounds of prospective authors, especially because standard publication formats vary among academic disciplines.