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OPEN RIVERS :
RETHINKING WATER, PLACE & COMMUNITY

GREAT LAKES, PERIL & PROMISE

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An interdisciplinary journal of public scholarship rethinking water, place & community
from multiple perspectives within and beyond the academy.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION TO ISSUE 29

GREAT LAKES, PERIL & PROMISE

By Laurie Moberg, Editor, and Joanne Richardson

Dear Reader,

As a river flows, it carries things with it: sediment, debris, but also history and memory. It transforms the landscape around it even as the landscape reciprocally shapes the river. Over the past decade, *Open Rivers: Rethinking Water, Place & Community* has sought to do the same—carrying stories and providing a space where ideas can flow, connect, and transform.

After ten years of publication, growth, and learning alongside our community, *Open Rivers: Rethinking Water, Place & Community* will

conclude its work as a journal. This is both a bittersweet and proud moment for all who have been part of this journey.

Since its first issue, *Open Rivers* has served as a gathering place for conversation across disciplines, communities, and watersheds. The journal has published the work of scholars, students, artists, and community partners—from along the Mississippi River and across the world—who have deepened our shared understanding of water, place, and environmental justice.



*Lake Superior at sunset. The Duluth Aerial Lift Bridge is just visible.
Image courtesy of Owen Holroyd.*

We are especially proud of the ways *Open Rivers* served as a gathering place for graduate students. Through editorial internships, the graduate student committee, and ongoing mentorship, the journal became a platform where emerging scholars could learn the craft of publishing, practice public scholarship, and connect their academic work to the needs and voices of broader communities.

The success of *Open Rivers* has also been rooted in its collaborative spirit—in the thoughtful guidance of our editorial board, the energy of scholars and university-based contributors, and the engagement of community partners. All these collaborators shared their expertise, experience, research, and practices to help shape the journal's vision. Together, we built a publication that bridged campus and community, scholarship and story, river and reader.

The work continues in this, our final issue, which explores the perils and the promise of the Great Lakes. In this issue, you will find a team of authors in Duluth, Minnesota, discussing the lasting impact of the sinking of the *SS Edmund Fitzgerald*, not only on themselves and their families but also on the lake itself, which is changing under the growing pressures of climate change. Our second feature discusses the intersection of law and lake on behalf of Lake Erie, and how this affects not only the rights and responsibilities of the people, but also the rights of the lake itself. We also include two columns that discuss the

Warmly,
Laurie Moberg, Editor
Joanne Richardson, Production Manager

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contrast between the Great Lakes as sites of refuge in a changing climate, and how that exact change imperils the lakes themselves and the people who rely on them. Finally, we republish an *Open Rivers* piece from 2019 that centers Lake Mille Lacs and its role as Minnesota's other great lake, particularly with respect to the Indigenous communities who have lived on its shores for thousands of years. By focusing on lakes—specifically the Great Lakes—in this final issue, we bring *Open Rivers* to a natural terminus, where the currents of this project empty into a larger body of shared knowledge, memory, and responsibility.

As we sunset, we do so with deep gratitude. We are grateful to our partners at the University of Minnesota—the Institute for Advanced Study and UMN Libraries Publishing Services—as well as to the many individuals who staffed the journal in various capacities: Joanne, Pat, Phyllis, Nnette, Laurie, and our graduate students.

The complete archive of *Open Rivers* will remain publicly available, preserving the knowledge, creativity, and care that have defined this project and helped it evolve into more than a journal: a community, a practice, and a place for exchanging ideas. We hope these pages inspire reflection and action for years to come.

To all who have contributed their ideas, time, and passion to this endeavor: thank you. *Open Rivers* has always been a collective project, and its legacy continues to flow through the communities it has helped connect.

About the Authors

Laurie Moberg is the editor for *Open Rivers: Rethinking Water, Place & Community*, a digital journal of public scholarship published at the University of Minnesota (UMN) by the Institute for Advanced Study and UMN Libraries Publishing. She earned her PhD in anthropology from UMN in 2018. Her doctoral research investigates recurrent episodes of flooding on rivers in Thailand and queries how the ecological, social, and cosmological entanglements between people and the material world are reimagined and reconfigured in the aftermath of disasters. In her current work, she approaches public scholarship as a critical strategy for expanding whose stories are heard, for shaping our public conversations, and for forming solutions for our shared ecological challenges.

Joanne Richardson is the production manager for *Open Rivers: Rethinking Water, Place & Community*, a digital journal of public scholarship published at the University of Minnesota (UMN) by the Institute for Advanced Study and UMN Libraries Publishing. She has a background in landscape architecture, geology, and computer science.