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**Abstract** This issue examines two significant milestones in Book of Mormon studies: the twenty-fifth anniversary of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* and the seminal work of Grant Hardy, particularly his *Understanding the Book of Mormon*.

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## Editors' Introduction

IN THIS ISSUE OF THE *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, we are looking at two significant milestones in Book of Mormon studies. First, we celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the *Journal* with a retrospective that reviews past and present editorships, noting unique areas of focus each editor has brought to the *Journal*. This retrospective also reviews the changes in naming, formatting, and style that the *Journal* has gone through and highlights specific noteworthy issues that have appeared through the years. Finally, all the editors up to the present offer their perspective on their tenure as editors and their reflections on the importance of the *Journal*.

While examining the history of the *Journal* is instructive, fruitful, and inspiring, we thought it might be worthwhile to look ahead to the future of the *Journal* and, more generally, the field of Book of Mormon studies. In doing so we imagine various ways to build on the foundational scholarship of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies and, at the same time, to stimulate new approaches to Book of Mormon studies that can help position the Book of Mormon in the larger academy. To this end, we have also provided in this issue a prospective as well as a retrospective, laying out what we hope to see happen during the next twenty-five years (and more) of Book of Mormon studies.

The second milestone we celebrate in this issue of the *Journal* is the seminal work of Grant Hardy. It has now been thirteen years since

the appearance of Hardy's *The Book of Mormon: A Reader's Edition* (University of Illinois Press, 2003) and six years since the publication of his *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide* (Oxford University Press, 2010). In many ways, Hardy's work has marked the possibility of a turning point in Book of Mormon studies, with the Book of Mormon being brought to the attention of the broader academy. We as editors see his work as transitional in a crucial way, and as we mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the *Journal*, we allow Hardy's work to help us take a look at both what has been done and what yet remains to be done.

Consequently, following our retrospective and prospective, we provide a series of contributions focused on Hardy's work. We begin with an interview, conducted by Blair Hodges, giving Hardy an opportunity to discuss his interest in the Book of Mormon and why and how he produced his significant books. Following the publication of Hardy's books, we have seen a host of other books and articles citing his books. With all this well-deserved attention, we as editors wondered if we might sponsor a conversation about how his work has affected the course of Book of Mormon studies. We invited six scholars from LDS and non-LDS vantage points to review and engage with Hardy's work—we asked them to assess specifically the strengths and weaknesses of *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, to identify areas where we still need to do more work, and to begin to build upon his work. We conclude the issue with Hardy's response to the several discussants, helping to cast the entire exchange as a give-and-take conversation.

Our heartfelt thanks go to Janiece Johnson, our book review editor, for all her hard work in bringing this issue together. We also deeply appreciate the assiduous care with which Shirley Ricks prepared the *Journal* for publication.

We hope this issue of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* will encourage more interest and excitement in continuing to explore the richness of the Book of Mormon. Let the next twenty-five years be even more productive for the Book of Mormon than the last twenty-five!

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