This Special Issue of Law in Context concerns legal history turns – that is, new directions or volte-faces in legal history and its interdisciplinarity. Legal history turns include deviations from historically-situated interpretations and practices in law and legal scholarship.

The articles in this Special Issue grew from the Griffith Law School’s Legal History Seminar Series, a public lecture initiative intended to contribute to the interest in legal history of the profession, judiciary, academe, and the public. Written by a cast that includes authors with internationally-renowned legal history credentials, this collection illustrates legal history turns’ dynamism and diversity, and is introduced with a Foreword by The Honourable Justice Susan Kiefel AC, the Patron of the Series. The articles, in the order of their presentation in the Issue, are as follows:

- Dr Karen Schultz on the wider intellectual landscape of Legal History Turns;
- Professor Emeritus John McLaren on the Comparative Turn;
- Associate Professor Penny Crofts on the Identic Turn;
- Professor Mark Finnane on the Narrative Turn;
- Professor The Honourable William Gummow AC on the Constitutional Turn;
- Professor Emeritus David Saunders on the Biographical Turn; and
- Professor Jim Phillips on the Contextual Turn.

All the articles, but for the first with its wider intent, concern one legal history turn as a focal point – this focus was the brief for the Series and its speakers. Greater details of the impetus for both the Series and the Special Issue, and acknowledgements of sincere thanks and appreciation, are included in the first article, ‘Legal History Turns: Topics and Optics’. That article additionally highlights key features of each author’s engagement with their respective turn.

The collection is undoubtedly eclectic in its diverse topics – it has a large geographic, temporal and contextual reach. Yet the glue or point of commonality in the articles is their recognition of a particular turn in knowledge relations and legal historical understandings, and their interaction with this turn as a way to better understand law and its historical context and construction.

Hence, while concerns have been voiced, in the wider intellectual landscape, with the apparent proliferation of turns in general, this Special Issue of Law in Context instances the value of exploring legal history
turns in particular. Each article contributes to legal history’s continued revitalisation and endorses the efficacy of critically examining legal history in the twenty-first century. Interest in the educative and critical value of legal history is not only the preserve of academe, but of the profession, judiciary, and the public.

Clearly, reflection on legal history turns can subvert or support current imaginings of, and reforms to, law. Legal history turns, therefore, can demonstrate rewarding and compelling new directions and insights for law’s re-imagining.

Karen Schultz
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