‘Father of Criticism and Theory’ to Step Down as Journal Editor

After 40 years at the helm, Ralph Cohen has retired as founder and editor of New Literary History. Cohen, the William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of English Emeritus at the University of Virginia and the former Director of the Commonwealth Center for Literary and Cultural Change, has been the only editor of NLH, the leading journal of literary theory and interpretation worldwide.

Cohen’s unbroken tenure as editor over a span of four decades is without precedent. He has played a leading role, nationally and internationally, in defining the field of literary studies and opening up new areas of intellectual inquiry.

“Ralph Cohen is the father of criticism and theory in our time,” says W.J.T. Mitchell, editor of the journal Critical Inquiry.

Rita Felski, William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor of English at the University of Virginia, will take over as the new editor. She is the author of five books, including The Gender of Modernity and Uses of Literature, and also the editor of Rethinking Tragedy.

New Literary History, published by the Johns Hopkins University Press, was the first journal to focus on the theoretical aspects of criticism and interpretation. The journal has translated and disseminated the work of major scholars whose work was not previously available in English.

The journal, established at the University of Virginia in 1969, extends well beyond literature departments, publishing the work of philosophers, sociologists, historians, anthropologists, and other scholars who address important issues of method or interpretation. New Literary History has the unique distinction of receiving six awards from the Council of Learned Journals.

Prominent scholars who have written for the journal include Roland Barthes, Harold Bloom, Helene Cixous, Jacques Derrida, Terry Eagleton, Stanley Fish, Jurgen Habermas, Wolfgang Iser, Fredric Jameson, Frank Kermode, Claude Levi-Strauss, Martha Nussbaum, Richard Rorty, Gayatri Spivak, George Steiner, and Tzvetan Todorov.

A special issue of New Literary History paying tribute to Cohen’s extraordinary achievements will be published at the end of 2009. Contributors will include Martha Nussbaum, Hayden White, Toril Moi, Jerome McGann, W. J. T. Mitchell, and University of Virginia President John Casteen.

About The Johns Hopkins University Press
Founded in 1878, The Johns Hopkins University Press is recognized as one of the world’s finest and most accomplished scholarly publishers. Today, in addition to a broad catalog of titles, The Press publishes more than 60 scholarly periodicals and more than 200 new books each year in the arts and humanities, technology and medicine, higher education, history, political science, and library science.