

6. Sharing Your Work

Edited and expanded by Jenny Ellison, PhD, Curator, Sports and Leisure, Canadian Museum of History

Historians have a lot of options for sharing their work, ranging from peer reviewed books to media interviews to blogs. Each medium has a different audience to which you can tailor your message. Sharing research has value for your career, regardless of what you hope to do. It is a form of scholarly and public engagement that will impact your audience's understanding of the past. This section explores different mediums for sharing historical research and how to get your work out there.

1. *Evergreen Guidelines*

Regardless of where you share your work, some basic rules apply:

- *Kindness and tone:* Collegiality is fundamental to all academic interactions. Even when your work critiques others', be conscious of your tone. Try to stand on the shoulders of other scholars rather than tear them down. Even seemingly ephemeral forms of engagement, like social media, should be undertaken thoughtfully. Beware of the “career limiting move” (#clm): say and share only what you would be willing to stand behind in a more formal setting.
- *Quality, not quantity:* If you are looking for a tenure-stream job, “quality” continues to mean publishing peer-reviewed work in journals and books. But even outside these types of publications, quality remains essential. Good research and writing on popular blogs like [ActiveHistory](#), [HistoireEngagée](#), or [The Conversation](#) can be a calling card for historians. They show your depth as a scholar as well as your ability to communicate to different audiences.
- *Be Prepared for Revision:* When you submit your work for consideration to a publication, do not expect it will be accepted without requests for revision. Whether you're working with a professional editor or a peer reviewer, you can expect feedback. If you're publishing for a wide audience, be prepared to connect your research to contemporary issues. If you're submitting to an anonymous peer reviewer, keep in mind they may see your work through a different lens than you or your supervisor. Peer review can be a difficult (some

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say ugly) process. Be open to constructive feedback. If someone is petty or cruel, seek support from your academic community.

- *Don't be afraid to say no:* For graduate students, opinions differ about how much of your research to publish and when. Talk to your mentors about how much you should share your work and ask for their input on the best venues. Very few conferences and publication opportunities are one-time-only. If your work isn't ready, if you are already overcommitted, or if your mental health is suffering, take a break from publishing that article, blog, or podcast.

2. Where to Share Your Work

As with most things related to academic work, there is a healthy debate about where scholars should focus their attention. Those who are looking to practice their craft in the

Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museum sector (*aka* GLAM), government departments or research consultancies may want to focus their efforts on industry-specific conferences, magazines, and journals. In these sectors, non-peer reviewed work may count as much as (if not more than) peer-reviewed publications.

Communicating with style and brevity may count more than complexity and engagement with scholarly literature.

If your goal is academic work, most agree that peer-reviewed articles/chapters and books should be your focus.

Publishing newspaper editorials, media interviews, blogging, and social media are expected of most public intellectuals, regardless of where they work. There is a growing acknowledgment that non-peer reviewed work should be acknowledged in hiring and tenure processes. Each university agreement is different, with some institutions counting public engagement towards service, and others not. By comparison, public engagement has great weight in museum and public history work. This isn't a debate that can be resolved in this career guide, other than to remind readers to approach sharing their work thoughtfully.

If you have a specific career goal in mind, do some research about the qualifications required for a job and the type of writing you'll be expected to do. If you're unsure about your next steps, consider sharing your work in a variety of venues.

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3. Social Media

A social media presence can help you expand the audience and impact of your work, and build a professional network. Used effectively, social media can elevate your profile, but keep in mind these are public spaces. Reflect upon what you share as well as how it might impact your mental health and professional reputation. This need not be an onerous process. Just reflect upon your digital identity and what you want to contribute to the online conversation. You must decide whether to combine your personal social media presence with your professional voice. Some people find keeping these two worlds separate is best. Once you've reflected upon your online identity, review this "[digital identity health check](#)" from the career resource site www.jobs.ac.uk. It will help you to optimize your online presence, which, in turn, will help you share your research and expand your professional network, share your research, and expand your professional network.

4. Conferences

Conferences are venues for circulating your work, learning and networking. They are essential places to explore your professional goals and opportunities. You can use conferences as a way to develop your research and solicit feedback on projects in process. Try to avoid creating a project for a conference. Conference talks are time-consuming and, ideally, should have a symbiotic relationship with your other research and professional work.

If you can, attend a few conferences before you give a paper. Be selective in where you present, perhaps consulting with a mentor to get their advice on the most collegial and productive events. Conferences can be intimidating, especially when senior scholars in the field appear social and relaxed and you have no one to talk to. If you see your favourite scholar in line for dinner, introduce yourself! Don't feel like you have to say anything about their work. Just ask them an open-ended question about the event (I.e. How are you enjoying the conference? Did you attend any interesting panels today?) or remark upon your experience ("I really enjoyed the keynote because ...").

Many conferences offer funding for graduate students, in the form of reduced conference fees or travel grants. Some waive registration fees in return for volunteering at the registration desk. Explore the conference website to learn more about these options. Your department or university may also offer travel money to

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assist with your registration, travel, and accommodation costs. In both cases, such funds may be restricted to paper presenters. Don't hesitate to inquire early about the availability of these resources. To qualify, you may have to apply several months in advance of the conference.

You should also take advantage of graduate student events at conferences. These people are your future peers and collaborators, and these venues are a great place to learn about the experiences of emerging historians from other universities. You should also consider attending committee or social events by groups within your scholarly association, like the public history group of the CHA. Here, you'll meet more established historians with similar interests and may find opportunities for collaboration. Beyond these social elements of conferences, there are a few other practicalities to consider:

I. Getting on the Program

Conferences are announced in Calls-for-Papers (CFPs) posted online. Check out our resources section for where to find this kind of information.

Conference program committees generally seek to develop a program that is balanced geographically, chronologically, and topically, including participants with diverse backgrounds and at various stages in their career, but a conference with a very focused theme may have a less comprehensive line-up. Most conferences, including the annual or regular meetings of large organizations, have a few highlighted themes that will also guide the committee's choices, although many papers that do not fit these themes will still make the final cut.

Conference sessions usually consist of two or three paper presenters, a chair, and a commentator who is expected to draw a few links between the papers and offer brief but constructive feedback to each presenter. Panels are often submitted in advance by a group of scholars. After a CFP is posted, many people put out a call-for-presenters through social media. You can initiate a panel yourself by reaching out to scholars in your field, but you don't have to submit as a panel. Although some conferences openly favour fully constituted panels, it is also perfectly acceptable to submit a paper.

In organizing a session, remember that the individual papers should clearly relate to each other and focus on a historically significant problem or topic. Avoid narrowly conceived sessions: only a small number of specialists will want to hear two papers on the same subject. Think broadly and comparatively. Use your session to bring

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together two or three papers that address the same theme in different ways, or by considering different time periods, groups, and approaches.

Typically, a proposal consists of a short summary or "abstract" of each proposed paper (usually a paragraph), a one-page CV for each participant, and a brief explanation of the purpose and significance of the panel. One person involved with the panel usually acts as coordinator, amassing the required material from each participant and submitting it to the conference organizers by the deadline.

II. Presenting

At the conference, each presenter will have from 10 to 30 minutes to present their work. Conferences also sponsor panels or roundtables on a given subject or controversy. Usually, these include more participants, each of whom speaks briefly to the issue at hand rather than delivering a formal paper. Whatever the format, make sure you follow instructions and stick to time limits. Some panel chairs and organizers ask for papers in advance (especially if you have a commentator). If this is agreed by your panel, send your finished work on time. Try to avoid the mistake of sending a 35-page paper to a commentator expecting to read a 10-12 page one.

Many established professionals joke about writing conference papers on airplanes. If you're new to the profession, make sure your paper is done in advance of the conference. Practice ahead of time and assume that you will take longer in front of an audience. Keep your paper short enough to stay within the assigned time. Your panel chair has the duty to cut off presentations after the allotted time has expired. You don't want to be asked to sit down just before you have reached that eloquent climax. Nor do you want to rush madly through a paper that you know is too long; you will lose your audience. Use simpler prose than you would for a written paper you intend to publish; your argument will be easier to follow if your sentences are relatively short and use few subordinate clauses. Avoid the temptation to say too much; do not include too many details, statistics, or disclaimers. The best conference papers are almost conversational and informal, where the speaker focuses on the thesis and its significance for the audience.

If a microphone is provided for your presentation, always use it. Always. Microphones are provided for accessibility purposes. It is not acceptable to simply speak loudly or to ask if anyone needs the microphone. Doing the latter outs people who may not want to be vocal about particular capacities. Just use the mic!

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Many online resources are available to help you create clear visual presentations to support your work. You should also consult guidelines to help make your presentation visually and intellectually accessible to all users. Don't let the technology dominate your talk, however. And be sure to show up early to your session to test your presentation and bring it in multiple formats.

The conference presentation (like the lecture) is also a performance. The quality of your work is the most important thing, but the audience will also evaluate your delivery. When giving your paper, remember to look out at your audience! Plan to wear an outfit that makes you feel comfortable and professional. If you can, rehearse the paper in front of colleagues or mentors.

Even after careful preparation, you can't control aspects of the conference presentation. Your session may be scheduled early and be poorly attended. You may have an audience member more interested in sharing their thoughts than engaging with your work. Whatever happens, engage with your panelists and audience as best you can.

5. Academic Publications

Peer-reviewed books and articles continue to carry the greatest weight in universities and colleges. Emerging historians seeking work in the academy should aim to publish their work in these types of publications.

If you have a dream publisher or journal you'd love to publish in, check their guidelines first. That way you can tailor your work and make choices about how much to publish

Once you begin publishing, register with <https://www.accesscopyright.ca/> and <https://publiclendingright.ca/sign-up> to ensure you receive royalties from reproductions of your work. It isn't a lot of money, but it is a modest reward for your work.

A caveat: beware of predatory journals that will rush to publish your work or ask for fees in relation to publishing. They may be publishing hoaxes or work that hasn't been reviewed.

I. Book Reviews

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Book reviews are a good starting point for academic publishing – a way to hone your capacity for collegial critique, engage in your field, and learn to polish your writing. You don't have to wait to be asked to write a review for a book. Let book review editors know you are interested in general (or in a specific title). How to do this varies by journal. Some will ask you to register as a reviewer or request that you add your name to a database. Others are less formal, posting lists of books available for review for which you can volunteer. Select a book that is close to your field of expertise, and avoid writing reviews of material published by your friends and mentors. For a writer, a book review is an important milestone in the research process and your review will shape other historians' first impression of their work. Whatever book you select, it is most important to write a fair analysis of the text and avoid unduly promoting or criticizing a work.

II. Journal Articles and Book Chapters

Scholars hoping to work in a university should try to publish one or two peer-reviewed articles during their PhD. Journals differ with respect to status, approach, and theme. Which journals are best is contested. Some departments and hiring committees (especially in the sciences and social sciences) rank journals and will use this ranking formulaically to assess job applications and tenure assessment. In other contexts, the prestige associated with a title operates informally and is often determined by one's ideological and methodological preferences. The post on *Unwritten Histories* by Andrea Eidingger offers [this helpful breakdown](#) of journals publishing work by Canadian historians that can give you a sense of their different approaches. New priorities like open-access publishing combined with critiques of bias and unpaid labour in peer reviews are changing the landscape of academic publishing. In the U.S., universities are more likely to rank journals using the H-Index.

Edited book collections are another way to get out an article. Calls for contributors normally get posted online via H-Net and other scholarly information networks. Editors of such books usually bring together scholars of varying levels of experience around a common theme. The review and revision process for such chapters is similar to those of a journal article. The value of an edited book chapter compared to a journal article is up for debate. Journal articles are a little easier to access online through databases and may therefore find a wider audience. A strong edited book, however, may get adopted in university courses. Before you write an article, consider

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what academic audience you're hoping to reach with your work and what journal will best help you to establish a research profile.

i) Submission

Journal and book editors will provide you with guidelines for the length of your article and their preferred citation style. Follow these guidelines and adapt your citations to the preferred format prior to submission. If an editor requests APA, they will not be thrilled to receive a paper that follows the Chicago Style. Eventually, you'll have to adapt your work to the specifications of the publications, so it is easier to do it from the start.

The audience for a journal article and book chapter is usually other academics as well as graduate and undergraduate students. The goal is to situate your work in relation to the existing scholarship, share original research, and contribute new ideas to historians' understanding of your topic. Here, as with all publishing, it is important not to distort or dismiss the work of other scholars. Jargon-free prose is the best approach. Trying to sound smart doesn't usually work out very well.

ii) Review and Revision

Submitted essays will go through a confidential process of evaluation by two or three recognized specialists in the field. Usually, the assessor is unknown to the author, but the author's name may or may not be known to the reviewer. Confidentiality is maintained in the spirit of encouraging honest but fair assessment and maintaining rigorous standards. Peer reviewers will provide feedback and recommend whether the article is ready for publication.

Then, the journal editor(s) or equivalent will: a) reject your present paper, b) ask you to significantly revise and resubmit it for another round of review, or c) accept it for publication once certain revisions are completed. Most publications require some revision. Sometimes, the assessors suggest contradictory advice. If this is the case, you can ask the editor for their feedback.

Rejection and harsh criticism from peer reviewers normally isn't personal or a measure of your self-worth. All of us, regardless of our seniority, find it disappointing. You can revise and resubmit the article to the same or a different journal. Critique is part of the professional life of an academic. The "Resources" section of this manual

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offers suggestions on places to seek academic and personal support in graduate school.

III. Books

The single-authored monograph is still widely viewed as the most effective way of securing promotion and tenure. Not all disciplines share this view and if you're aiming for a social sciences job, publishing your dissertation as a series of articles is the norm. In a tenure-stream job search, you should demonstrate that your thesis is in the process of publication and indicate your plans, if they aren't already underway.

A book represents the culmination of a research project; in the case of new graduates, this is usually a revised version of your dissertation. But even the most excellent thesis will not likely be immediately acceptable for publication. The rules that govern the production of a dissertation are different from the needs of academic book publishers. A dissertation is sometimes narrowly focused and built around making claims of originality solely by reference to a vast literature of other scholars. It's a book-length project designed to evaluate your competence as a historian, but it might not appeal to the wider audience needed by (increasingly cash-strapped) publishers. University presses will expect some revision and polish. Some authors do further research for the book, but it isn't always required. You may be asked to shift from the vantage point of the graduate student proving yourself worthy of attention to an "expert" who can discuss the relevant historiography with authority.

i) Choosing a Publisher

Research prospective university presses before you submit your book proposal. In Canada, most pre-tenure historians work with university presses because their work will be subject to peer review. Post-tenure, some scholars work with trade publishers that produce books for a wider audience.

You can get a sense of the approach of a press – in terms of the types of material they publish, their marketing, and tone – by checking out their catalogues or talking to editors at conferences. Different publishers may have different timetables and different reputations for efficiency. Ask other authors about the pros and cons of working with particular presses.

University presses will have submission guidelines on their website. You'll be asked to put together a proposal outlining your book's key contributions, its audience, and to

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provide specific details about each chapter. Normally, it is the author who makes first contact. You can simply submit a proposal. If you have the option, however, introduce yourself before you submit by email or at a conference. Let the editor know what you're working on. They may have suggestions to help the proposal process go smoothly.

Note that you can send a query and a proposal to more than one publisher, but once a press asks to read your manuscript, do not submit to anyone else for consideration until you know whether or not that publisher wants to publish your work.

ii) Working with Your Publisher

Your publisher will provide you with style guidelines for the manuscript. As with all publishing, these need to be followed. Press editors also prepare reports for their publications committee on the quality and commercial viability of the project. Once the manuscript is complete, your publisher will send it out to two or three anonymous peer reviewers.

At some point, your press will ask you to sign a contract – often when the manuscript is accepted for review or after revisions are complete and it is ready to go into the production process. The press will likely have an exit clause in the contract, which is language that allows them to withdraw if there are problems in the review process. Canadian university presses do not have big budgets, so general wisdom is that there isn't much room for authors to negotiate royalties and other perks. That said, you should ask questions and assert yourself. Ask for details on how many books will be published, in what format, and at what price point. You can also ask if you can retain copyright on the work and have extra author copies.

iii) Review and Revision

Book production can be a slow process. You may be surprised about the amount of work authors undertake to prepare the manuscript. Some presses may do this in a different order, but the work includes:

- Peer review: you may be asked to do more than one round of revision, depending on the comments you get from your first readers.
- Images and tables: you will likely be responsible for submitting high resolution digital scans of any images and maps included in the book. You will also likely

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be expected to clear copyright for this material. Most journals won't have a budget for a staff member to do this for you or to pay for images.

- Copy editing: once the manuscript is accepted, your publisher will send it to a professional copy editor. You'll have to be in regular communication with this editor, responding to queries about your work.
- Indexing: presses ask authors to do their own indexes. If you're able to secure funding, they can recommend a professional indexer. If you do it yourself, investigate options such as indexing software that might help offset the time and cost associated with this task.
- Page proofs: the book will be typeset and you'll receive page proofs. At this point, only minor edits are allowed.
- ASPP application: Canadian academic presses can apply for federal grants to subsidize their scholarly books through the [ASPP \(or Aid-to-Scholarly-Publishing Program\)](#). The confidential peer review process is carried out by both publisher and the ASPP. In many but by no means all cases, the fate of the book depends upon the grant. Your editor will guide you through this process. You'll be asked to describe the book, make a case for its contribution to the field, identify keywords, and explain how much of the work has previously been published.

iv) Marketing

As your book nears completion, your press will provide marketing forms. You'll help the press identify journals where the book is likely to be reviewed and faculty who might want to adopt the book for courses. The press will also include you in developing a summary of your book from their website and the back cover.

Authors can play a big role in the marketing of their book, if they choose. Ask your press if they have a blog or other venues where you can write a post, an op-ed, or share an excerpt of your book. Your press may have other options for promotion – such as giving a talk or answering questions at a conference booth.

You can also undertake this kind of promotion on your own, but check with the press to make sure they're aware of your initiative.

6. Magazines, Journals and Op-Eds

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Magazines, industry publications, and newspapers have different audiences than academic journals. Publishing in these venues requires lively, tight writing. Your message will have to be clear and references to research publications excluded (or substantially limited).

If you're pursuing a non-academic university job, or looking for work in the GLAM sector, or with consultancies, these venues may offer better professional payoff than academic work.

Submission guidelines for popular publications are not quite as standardized as they are for academic journals and presses. Some examples of potential outlets below:

i) Op-Eds

Op-eds are opinion pieces on newsworthy topics. If your research helps to provide context on headline-making events, an op-ed is a good way to get your ideas out there. McGill University has a [useful list of tips](#) and links for researchers who are preparing an op-ed for Canadian newspapers.

Publications will post guidelines on what to submit on their website. To gauge interest, you can send a one-paragraph pitch to the Opinions editor before you submit. But keep in mind that the turnaround time may be less than 24 hours. The paper will want to share your piece while the topic is still in the news.

ii) Magazines and Journals

Professional magazines and journals are a good venue for sharing research and projects about the practice of history. In these venues, a strong narrative or storytelling element is key. They aren't just mini-academic articles. These are standalone pieces that tell the story of your work or ideas in lively, concise prose.

Magazines publish guidelines online to help authors prepare a pitch. Some, like the editorial [guidelines for *Canada's History*](#), give you in-depth information about the preferred approach, length and format of an article. Most magazines also ask that you emphasize links between [research and contemporary Canada](#). Providing historical context is important but publishers want a concrete connection to current events that will hook their readers.

7. Creative Storytelling, Digital Projects and Exhibitions

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If you're in a public history program, your final project might be a three-dimensional exhibition, creative or digital product that does not rely heavily on written words. For historians, creative projects offer great potential to engage and immerse an audience in an idea, to tell stories, and to expand the reach of scholarly research. Such projects will likely rely on other forms of promotion – social media, blog posts, word of mouth or ads, to draw attention to the work. If you are working with a physical project, try to document it with photos and videos that you can share the work on job applications.

Creative projects can comprise a wide range of techniques and technologies, and have, perhaps, fewer hard guidelines than other forms of sharing your work. Concordia University's "Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling" has a [good set of resources](#) to introduce you to this area. The Resources section of [Museums.ca](#) and the [National Council on Public History](#) also contain a wealth of ideas and guides for this type of work.

Whatever tools you use, sharing your work is about getting your ideas out there and connecting with your audience. It helps you to participate in a scholarly conversation, shape the historical literature and to reach a larger public. Always keep your mental and professional health a priority, but at the same time, don't be afraid to put thoughtful ideas into the world. Engagement can reap unexpected rewards and expand upon what you do as a historian.