



History to the Public

Impact of Collaborative Blogging: Belonging to Wider Research Communities

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About Us

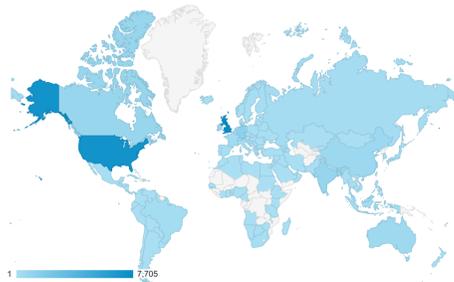
History to the Public (HTTP) is a worldwide, multidisciplinary history website, which focuses on sharing, learning, and disseminating research using social media, digital humanities projects and blogging.

Our aims include:

- making historical resources accessible to a wider audience
- sharing knowledge and skills through collaboration
- creating a community of scholars who are passionate about public history

We publish a wide (and ever-expanding) range of written articles, and are also moving into audio production.

Our project gets around 2000 views per month. Our readers are mainly from the United States of America and the United Kingdom, although we do have worldwide readership.



Collaborations

Our project has had a collaborative focus since its birth, in part by design and in part out of necessity, as our members are scattered across the world. There is a pervasive attitude among historians that sharing and collaboration diminishes the value of your work. We aim to counter this thought by showing how collaboration can create something better and more inspiring.



Internally, we regularly work on articles as a group. Each member of the team adds something new and provides a sounding platform for ideas. Externally, on our project website we have curated bibliographies for different topic areas, to serve as a starting-point for researchers at a variety of levels.



Our project has also links with other historical projects such as The Women's Land Army website and project, Inciting Sparks and HistoryWorksTV.



Our Content

HTTP publishes a range of posts in different formats, appealing to the varying tastes of our readership. Our content is divided into the following categories:

- **ARTICLES:** Our main form of content focuses on 5 main categories: Current Affairs, Popular Culture, Research, Working in the Field and Working Outside the Field.
- **BIBLIOGRAPHIES/READING LISTS:** We not only want to write about our research but also to make it easier for others to learn about different areas of history. Our bibliographies reflect the knowledge and interests of our writers, and range from the relatively broad (such as 'Historiography') to the more specialized (including 'History of Childhood' and 'Counterfactual History').
- **PODCASTS:** These are a new addition to the blog, and will include both bite-sized episodes centred on specific historical concepts and questions, and more extended group discussions of themes arising from our research.
- **REVIEWS/THEME MONTHS:** This focuses on bringing together different areas of research that speak to various themes within history. Women's History Month 2016 worked well in not only recruiting new writers, but sharing best practice in the area of gender history.

The variety of our content stems from the great diversity of our contributors; the HTTP team hails from all manner of personal, cultural and academic backgrounds, and each of us brings different interests and areas of specialization to the site. We are also constantly recruiting new writers, seeking to expand our repertoire further.



Why Do Public History?

The advantages of academic blogging are, slowly but surely, becoming more widely recognised in the humanities. There are a range of reasons for researchers to get involved:

- it offers them a public forum and a testbed for new research and ideas (a growing number of individuals and institutions are using it in this way)
- it fosters a climate of intercultural communication, allowing writers to engage with both fellow bloggers, readers and scholars in the field
- it serves as a channel for academic networking. This is something all researchers need to learn to do anyway, but blogging provides the tools to make the process easier and more enjoyable.
- it allows them to demonstrate their commitment to public engagement, a key requirement looked for by most external funding bodies in the UK, USA and elsewhere.

Despite these advantages, the means by which new researchers are usually introduced to academic blogging remain rather arbitrary, particularly in the humanities. Group blog projects such as HTTP offer an effective and alternative way to become part of an active, productive scholarly network.

For non-academic audiences, the advantages of academic blogging are clear:

- it offers access to the latest scholarship without any kind of barrier or paywall (unlike traditional journals)
- it illustrates the value of the humanities to an often sceptical public. By making clearer the contributions of humanities research to our general knowledge and its relevance to current affairs, academic blogs show that the humanities are far more than the obscure and esoteric interests of academics or hobbyists.
- it helps to demystify academia by breaking down the barriers between researchers and the public by making the research process more transparent and accessible. This in turn makes it easier for academics to engage with the mainstream public conversation.
- it allows the public to share in the results of publicly funded research (the 'value for money' argument). Aside from being good ethical practice, this also helps integrate academics into public life.



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