



# AskHistorians

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### ASKHISTORIANS 2020 DIGITAL CONFERENCE

#### **“BUSINESS AS UNUSUAL: HISTORIES OF RUPTURE, CHAOS, REVOLUTION, AND CHANGE”**

2020 has been a year marked by rapid and continuous change. From the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has cast academic, professional, and personal plans into disarray, to the global and national responses to state oppression, police brutality, and political action, this year has already witnessed the making of a great deal of history. In response to the disruptive nature of these events, the AskHistorians public history forum is hosting our first ever conference as an online event open to all. The theme, “Business as Unusual”, reflects how human history is filled with examples of people struggling to make do under difficult and quickly changing circumstances. It also describes the conference itself: digital in origin, unrestricted, and open to anyone around the world with a passion for history.

Yet, the AskHistorians Digital Conference is also business as usual. Panels of 3–4 papers will be arranged by theme and presenters will be given the opportunity to discuss their research with an interested audience afterwards. Further information about the conference format, its platform, and the advantages of a digital conference has been attached.

We encourage papers from any academic discipline that engages with the past as the past (e.g., history, art history, literature, religious studies, etc.) and contributions related to any geographic area or period of human history are welcomed.

#### **TOPICS OF INTEREST INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:**

- Digital history as a response to disruption
- Disruptions in the source record and how this affects research
- Disruptions versus ruptures
- Experiences of catastrophe or revolution
- Historical artistic and literary depictions of catastrophe, real or imagined
- Responses to disruptions and disasters (personal or societal)
- Ruptures and revolutions in historical memory
- The ordinary versus the extraordinary, including perspectives on ways to investigate that difference in the twenty-first century

“Business as Unusual” will be held on 15—17 September 2020 and will feature a keynote presentation by Dr. Alex Wellerstein of the Stevens Institute of Technology.

Please send proposals for papers ten minutes in length to [askhistorians@gmail.com](mailto:askhistorians@gmail.com) by 11:59 PM EDT on 10 July 2020. Proposals should include an abstract of no more than 200 words describing your paper and a short biography of no more than 100 words. Applicants will be notified of the committee’s decisions no later than 10 August 2020. This is a free conference. No fees will be collected to present or to attend.



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## FURTHER INFORMATION

### About AskHistorians

AskHistorians is the largest public history forum on the internet, with 2 million unique monthly visitors and nearly 1.2 million subscribers. The model is simple: anyone may ask a question about history, from ancient Near Eastern politics to pop music, and receive an in-depth and comprehensive answer supported by up-to-date scholarly research. We are known for our strict moderation policies, ensuring high standards of content and civility, and zero tolerance for hate speech and bigotry.

### The Conference

Our aim is to provide the depth and rigour of a traditional academic conference while maximizing the opportunities of a digital environment, including the participation of a large and diverse audience. Accepted papers will be grouped into thematic panels of 3–4 papers per panel. These panels will be pre-recorded prior to the actual conference date and then released at regular intervals on the AskHistorians forum during the conference, followed by a live, AMA-style online Q&A to allow the audience to engage directly with presenters. Recorded panels will also be released as a standalone episode of the AskHistorians podcast series.

#### Papers

We ask that speakers prepare a ten-minute talk that introduces and contextualizes their topics and key findings. Papers should be aimed at an audience that has limited existing knowledge. We also ask that visual aids are kept to an absolute minimum. If vital, they must be prepared as a separate, downloadable document rather than as a slideshow. This will mean gathering any copyright releases that are necessary for images contained in these visual aids as such documents will effectively become open-access once they are made available for download.

#### Panels

Panels will be recorded in the weeks ahead of the conference itself. The group recording will cover each speaker's paper, as well as a roundtable conversation led by the panel chair, drawing out commonalities, parallels, and divergences for further discussion.

At a convenient time ahead of recording, chairs will meet with their panelists to go over the format, ensure that all parties are familiar with the technology to be used, and identify potential lines of discussion to cover in the recording.

#### Conference

Across the three days of the conference, recorded panels will be posted at regular intervals. Once your panel goes live on our forum, our audience – historians and the public alike – will be invited to ask the speakers about their papers and research more broadly.

During the conference, we will also be running public and private networking and social events for participants.

#### Afterwards

In the weeks and months following the conference, we will release each panel recording as a standalone episode of our long-running podcast series. In the meantime, we hope that participants will consider sticking around and getting involved with our day-to-day activity!



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## **Why Join Us in September? Or, the Advantages of Participating in a Digital Conference**

### Reach an Audience

AskHistorians is one of the largest public history projects on the internet, with a unique global reach. We expect tens of thousands of visitors to engage with panels during the conference, and thousands more to download each panel podcast. If you thought your research didn't have a 'public', think again!

### Answer Actual Questions

If there's one thing our users know how to do, it's ask good questions! In a first for any conference, we are able to promise that any post starting with "This is not so much a question as a comment" will be removed immediately.

### Develop and Refine Digital Proficiencies

As is becoming clearer every day, it takes skill and experience to teach and talk about research online. Rather than putting the burden on speakers to adapt, we're committed to providing the support, training and platform required to hold a dynamic and engaging online conference, integrated into an established, successful digital architecture.

### Make History Democratic

One of our founding principles is that expertise and interest in historical knowledge does not reside solely in academic institutions. We offer an unprecedented chance for exchange between historians working inside and beyond the academy, blurring the line between "public outreach" and "doing history." Participating in this conference is thus a wonderful opportunity to showcase your research interests to a global, public audience.