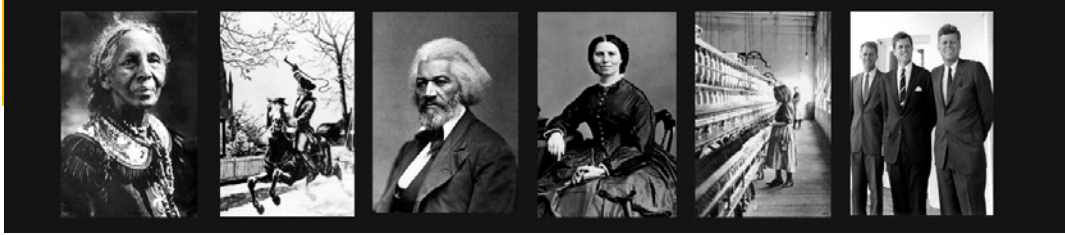


The Historical Journal of Massachusetts



Book Review Guidelines

Dear Reviewer:

Thank you for your interest in reviewing one of our books. There is no specific deadline—we publish in January and June. Reviews are accepted on a rolling basis, although we hope you could complete your review within six months of receiving the book.

Please find our guidelines below:

1. Reviews should be 800-1,500 words in length.
2. Submissions should be sent as a digital Word file to: assistant.masshistory@westfield.ma.edu
3. Your name, position, and institutional affiliation should be included in your by-line.
Example: Jane Doe is an assistant professor of history at Westfield State University.
4. Heading should be formatted as follows:
Author. *Title*. Place: Publisher, Year. # of Pages. Price (paperback/hardcover).
Example: Michael Perman. *Emancipation and Reconstruction: 1862-1879*. Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1987. 150 pages. \$13.95 (paperback).
5. You are welcome to submit several reviews in, but we will typically publish no more than two by the same reviewer per issue. Note: We send books one at a time, after receiving the review, another book may be requested.
6. If you are **unable to complete the review** please return the book so another can elect to review it.
7. We review works that have a New England-wide focus, but we request that the Massachusetts angle be highlighted in your review.
8. We welcome your suggestions for books to review and will request any book that you're interested in from the publisher if we don't have it. We are also interested in receiving reviews of **exhibits** and/or **websites sponsored by museums or historic sites**.

Reviewers will receive one copy of the journal that their review is published in plus a PDF of their review. Additional journal copies may be purchased at \$5.00 each.

Due dates: We publish 6-12 reviews per issue on a “first submitted, first printed” basis. We cannot guarantee the inclusion of a review in any particular issue.

Writing an Academic Book Review

Suggestions for Novice Reviewers

An academic or scholarly book review could be mostly a book “report” – meaning a summary of the book, with a few sentences analyzing the strengths and weaknesses if you feel comfortable, or it could offer a much more critical “review.”

1. **Read several different book reviews from HJM or another academic history journal to get a sense of different styles.** When reading book reviews, highlight all adjective/verbs and common phrases/style features that you could use in your own book review.
2. **Do some background research:**
 - a. **Who’s the author?** Are they well-known or is this their first book? Are they a historian, sociologist, anthropologist, journalist, etc.?
 - b. **Read any other reviews of your book that you can find in academic databases (such as JSTOR and Project Muse) to see what other scholars have said about the strengths and weaknesses of the book.** Jot down notes on what they say and the verbs/adjectives they use. When you’re writing your own book review you can use these notes, but don’t reread the actual reviews.
3. Answer/consider the following questions:
 - a. What are the author’s main reasons for writing this book? What **questions** are they trying to answer?
 - b. What are their **main conclusions**?
 - c. What types of primary sources have they used?
 - d. In your opinion, what are the book’s strengths and weaknesses?
4. **Notice the style of the writing and common phrases used in book reviews:**
 - a. The author argues, contends, points out, analyzes, describes, explores, examines, concludes, asserts, portrays, explains, depicts, investigates, questions, studies, focuses on, etc.
 - b. Informative, illuminating, well-written, well-researched, thorough, fascinating, well-documented, readable/ accessible, informative, engaging writer, thought-provoking, etc.

Common Grammar & Editing Mistakes

1. If you use **quotes** from the book, put the page number the quote is found on in parenthesis *before* the period.
Example: Smith argues, “One should never jump to conclusions” (165).
2. The title of the book **must be italicized** throughout the review.
3. Present tense must be used when describing the author’s actions:
The author argues/explores the complexities of/concludes/divides her book into four major sections/fails to consider important new research findings/etc.
HOWEVER, note the use of two different verb tenses in this sentence:
In his book, *Victorian Era Authors*, historian Mark Powers argues that Jane Lexington **was** the most important female writer of the 1800s.
Past tense should be used for events that actually happened in the past!
4. Books don’t talk, people do!
Incorrect: “The *book* says/argues/concludes...”
Correct: “The *author* writes/argues/concludes...”
Ex: “Historian Lynn Hewlitt concludes that women workers at Lowell were not exploited...”
5. Refer to authors and historic figures by **last name** only, BUT the first time they are mentioned their full name should be used. Never refer to authors and historic figures by their first names.
Example: “*Jane Lexington* was the most important female writer of the 1800s. *Lexington* was one of the few women to succeed as a novelist...”