

2020 AWARDS



Smithsonian
National Postal Museum

The National Postal Museum Awards for Scholarship in Postal History

The National Postal Museum sponsors three biennial prizes for recent scholarship on the history of the postal system in the United States and its territories, and their antecedents. The U.S. Postal Service started these awards in 2007 to honor its first historian, Rita Lloyd Moroney. These prizes – now, the National Postal Museum Awards for Scholarship in Postal History – are designed to recognize scholarship on the history of the American postal system and to raise awareness of the significance of the postal system in American life. Scholarship by graduate students is eligible for a \$1,000 award; work by scholars and professionals (faculty members, independent scholars, and public historians) is eligible for a \$2,000 award; and public history scholarship presented online is eligible for a \$1,000 award.

The museum is pleased to announce that the winners in 2020 are:

Professional Scholarship:

David Johnson. *Buying Gay: How Physique Entrepreneurs Sparked a Movement*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019.

Graduate Student Scholarship:

L. Bao Bui. “‘I Feel Impelled To Write’: Male Intimacy, Epistolary Privacy, and the Culture of Letter Writing during the American Civil War.” PhD diss., University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 2016.

Alicia Maggard. **“One Nation, under Steam: Technopolitics, Steam Navigation, and the Rise of American Industrial Power.”** PhD diss., Brown University, 2019.

Dr. David Johnson is a professor in the Department of History at the University of South Florida. Dr. Bao Bui teaches at the University of Illinois, Chicago, and Dr. Alicia Maggard teaches at Williams-Mystic, the Ocean and Coastal Studies Semester of Williams College and Mystic Seaport Museum.

“It is remarkable in how many ways mail delivery has shaped the United States,” noted Dr. Susan Smith, the Winton M. Blount Research Chair at the museum and the chair of the award review committee. “I learned so much from these works. The winners address such wide-ranging topics [including:] the influence of the Post Office as a contracting authority in the development of transportation routes, and the binding of the new American states in the West to the more established states in the East; [the Post Office] as a public service whose availability and promise of privacy encouraged improved literacy and intimacy, shaping familial correspondence during the Civil War; and [the Post Office] as a key component of a market economy, filling public demand while simultaneously serving as a law enforcement agency policing the morality of the mail. Indeed, gay consumer culture and understandings of community developed as they did through entrepreneurs’ use of, and struggles with, the postal service.”

The National Postal Museum congratulates the three winners and thanks all those who submitted material. Their diverse work advances postal history scholarship in new directions and exciting ways that demonstrate the centrality of the postal service and the mail it carries to American history.

The museum will begin accepting submissions for the next Awards for Scholarship in Postal History on December 3, 2021. For more information on the prizes and eligibility, please see <https://aps.buzz/NPMScholarshipAwards>.

The National Postal Museum Awards for Scholarship in Postal History

[The Award Winners, 2020](#)

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Eligibility

The awards are intended for scholarship on any topic on the history of the postal system in America to the present time. Though submissions must be historical in character, they can draw on the methods of disciplines other than history. Comparative or international historical studies are eligible if the American postal system is central to the discussion.

Prizes

Graduate – \$1,000 award

Professional – \$2,000 award

Digital public history – \$1,000 award

The National Postal Museum will publicize the work of the successful awardees.

Graduate Prize: This prize is for scholarship written or published by graduate students. Submissions can take the form of a journal article, a book chapter, a conference paper, a M.A. thesis, or a doctoral dissertation. Submissions are eligible if they were originally written when the author was a student, even if they were subsequently revised for publication. All submissions must include a signed statement from the author attesting to his or her status at the time when the initial work was completed. Individuals may win the junior prize just once but are eligible to receive the senior prize the next award year or thereafter for a different project.

Professional Prize: This prize is for scholarship published by faculty members, independent scholars, public historians and other non-degree candidates. Submissions

may take the form of a journal article, a book chapter, or a book. Senior award winners are not eligible to win in consecutive award years.

Digital Public History Prize: This prize is for a non-commercial interpretative research project, designed primarily for non-academic audiences and presented online and freely available for the general public. Submissions may take the form of one or several of the following: online documentary video, exhibition, multimedia essay, visualization (maps, timelines, etc.), oral histories, podcasts, and/or critical editions of digitized primary source materials.

We advise applicants to ensure that their sites are fully operational once submitted for award consideration. We recommend that applicants submit their best effort and not revise the digital project during the review process.

Restrictions: Submissions must have been published, accepted (in the case of theses and dissertations), or presented (in the case of conference papers), in a four-year period prior to the application deadline. Submissions that do not receive a prize may be re-submitted the following award year if they fall within these restrictions.

Selection Criteria

What is the significance for our understanding of the American postal system and its role in America's past?

How original and strong is the argument?

How imaginative is its use of primary sources (textual, visual and/or material)?

How effectively does it engage existing scholarship?

How well is it written?

For the digital public history award, we will also be asking: how well is the submission presented to engage a general public? Is the entire site openly and freely available and fully accessible to all members of the public? Be sure to clearly define in the cover letter who constitutes the creative and content team to be considered for the award.

The committee reserves the right not to award any prize during an award year if no submissions are deemed suitable.

Deadline and Submission Procedure

Submissions must be sent via email or Dropbox or postmarked by December 3, 2021. If sending physical submissions, please send four copies to Dr. Smith at the address below. No late entries will be accepted.

In a cover letter, authors must attest that the submission meets the eligibility requirements. Submissions will not be returned.

Send all materials and direct any questions to:

Dr. Susan Smith at: smithsu@si.edu

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Decisions will be announced in April.

Source:

<https://postalmuseum.si.edu/the-national-postal-museum-awards-for-scholarship-in-postal-history>