

January 12, 2026

History@Work Images Style Guide

This guide is for writers of the National Council on Public History blog *History@Work*. We welcome feedback and comments at any time: historyatwork@ncph.org.

Does each *History@Work* essay need an image?

Yes! Each *History@Work* essay needs at least one image. Images improve your blog post's appearance and help it stand out when shared on social media.

What kind of images should the author select?

Choose images directly related to the text and/or the argument. As you consider images for your essay, ask yourself if a selected image is directly related to the post. The image's relationship to the essay should be obvious to the reader or explained clearly in the post. Below are a few examples of posts in which we think authors used images particularly well to support their essays:

<https://ncph.org/history-at-work/reactivating-forgotten-records-holocaust-art-recovery-in-hungary/>

<https://ncph.org/history-at-work/the-williamsburg-bray-school-scholars-legacy/>

<https://ncph.org/history-at-work/scrapbook-exploring-carson-mccullers-sexuality/>

Consider image copyright when you select your images. It is the responsibility of the author to secure permissions or to prove they are not required. It is best to select an image that you produced, and whose copyright you thus own, or to choose one that is open access, under a [Creative Commons \(CC\) license](#), or in the public domain. We ask authors to share copyright information via the Images Intake Form when they submit their first draft, since securing and/or verifying permission can sometimes take a while. We will not send an essay to our copyeditors until image permissions are verified with the Lead and Affiliate Editors.

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How many images should authors use?

Every *History@Work* essay is different, but most will look best with 1-3 images. However, exercise caution! Don't try to include an extra image that is *not* directly related to the essay just because it will "look" better. Including an unrelated image could confuse readers.

If authors have a preference on approximately where they would like an image placed in their essay, they can indicate that on the Images Intake Form or by embedding the images in their first draft. Avoid placing images at the very beginning of the essay (before the text begins) or at the very end. Your images will look best interspersed throughout the text. If you want to use more than three images, we encourage you to link to those additional images (assuming they're available online) instead of embedding them.

Should authors include images with their first draft?

Yes! We consider images a part of your essay and want to edit your essay knowing what kind of images you want to include. Submit them through the Images Intake Form with your first draft so your editors can ensure we have everything needed for publication.

Do you have technical requirements for your images?

Please try to use images that are 300DPI or more. If you're not sure how to check DPI, this resource from Carleton University should help:

<https://carleton.ca/theprintshop/story/how-to-find-your-image-properties/>.

72DPI is usually good enough for screens, but some folks do print blog posts (and 300DPI is usually better for print). If 72DPI is the only option, we can usually use it. If you have a really high-resolution image you'd like to point people to also, feel free to do so. We probably won't be able to publish hi-res images like TIFs on the blog since those images can take a while to load, but we can link to where they are available.

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Do authors need to provide image captions, credits, and permissions?

Yes! For captions, please use our in-house caption and credit style. We prefer that the captions are not interpretative. Save the interpretation for the essay! The caption should provide enough information that the reader can determine where to get the original; who the artist or creator is; and the nature of the permission to publish.

Please include as much as you can from this list in this order: creator (if known), title or description of image/object/art, date created, where created, medium, dimensions (usually optional depending on context), credit (sometimes called “courtesy”), repository, donor information, object number (if there is one). **Be sure to also provide a link back to the digitized image if available.** We will use “credit” in our caption unless the repository requests something else. If no courtesy or credit language is specified, you need only list the repository.

Examples (edited from originals on the blog itself for consistency):

Opening reception of the *Out on Campus* exhibit on August 19, 2022, Historic Harrisburg Resource Center, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Photo credit: LGBT Center of Central PA History Project.

Picnic at Marche Lake, ca. 1906, Marche, Arkansas, featuring many original settlers and the community’s second priest. CALS Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, Donated by Joseph Gubanski, 37653015509477.

The 7th Annual Meeting of the Quechua Alliance at Harvard University, Boston, Massachusetts, April 1, 2023. Photo credit: thequechua.org.

Pins purchased for NCPH to wear at NCPH 2023. Photo courtesy of Stephanie Rowe.

Do authors need to provide alternative text?

Yes! Alternative text (or alt text) helps screen readers describe images to people who can't see them. Authors should submit alt text for all images. There are many websites that cover how to write alt text. One method is to

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create alt text of an image in the same way you might describe a picture to someone over the phone. Alt text, captions, and access copies should work together to provide all readers with access to visual content.

To learn more about alt text practices and philosophies, check out this guide from the digital accessibility office at Princeton (<https://accessibility.princeton.edu/how/content/alternative-text>), the Perkins School for the Blind (<https://www.perkins.org/resource/how-write-alt-text-and-image-description-s-visually-impaired/>), and Alt-Text as Poetry (<https://alt-text-as-poetry.net/>).

Do authors have a chance to look at the essay laid out with images prior to publication?

Yes and no. We do not provide these as a default, but are happy to honor a request to see proofs if you want. Please indicate your wish to see proofs when submitting revised content so that we know before we send the essay to the copyeditors and can build that review into our editing process.

Do you have any other tips or guidelines for working with images in essays?

Yes! Please review extra tips and guidelines below.

Alternative ways to include images in your essay. If you cannot include an image in your essay due to the cost of securing permissions, space, or something else, consider hyperlinking to artifacts and images instead. If you are looking for images to use, check out repositories that have open access/public domain images such as certain museums, libraries, archives, the Library of Congress, etc. If you are stuck, you can always ask your editors for ideas as to where to look.

Image alterations. If original images are edited, certain alterations should be noted in the caption (for example, increasing an image's contrast to help improve clarity, or whether the published image is a detail of a larger image). However, it is usually OK not to mention alterations such as selective cropping to eliminate people or things who should not be published (such as children), excess empty space, etc.

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Abstract images. If you use an abstract image in your essay, explain it in the text and/or alt text (see above).

Stock photos or images. Please do not use stock photos or images in your essay. If you are having trouble illustrating your essay, work with your editor to find something appropriate. We like our essays to have some visual personality.

Memes. Avoid using memes as illustrations unless they are the subject of the blog. Memes are complex images that need a lot of space to explain and interpret. Typically, there is not enough space in a *History@Work* essay to do a meme justice. This is a particular concern since many readers may not be familiar with the meme you want to publish, and they can often read as snide, inside jokes—or worse.

Screenshots. We prefer you try to illustrate your essay with something other than a screenshot, but we also know that sometimes it's all you have—or that it is particularly relevant. Some authors may wish to use screenshots that show individuals' likenesses. If you do choose to use a screenshot of this nature, please send us proof of permission from everyone pictured to use their likeness on the blog.

People in images. Please be sure to use images of people only if the photographs were taken in public space and/or in a place where you know people signed-off on being photographed. Verifying permission to publish people's likenesses on the blog is preferred. We do not publish contemporary photos of children unless you have permission to do so.

Thank you for reviewing this guide to publishing images on *History@Work*! We are always open to improvements, so please get in touch with us at historyatwork@ncph.org if you have a suggestion.