

Johns Hopkins University Press Podcast

Sandy Holguín and Jennifer Davis, *Journal of Women's History*

May 12th, 2021

Mary Alice Yeskey

Welcome to the Johns Hopkins University Press podcast. I'm Mary Alice Yeskey with the JHU Press Journals Division. The award-winning *Journal of Women's History* is the first journal devoted exclusively to the international field of women's history. It publishes cutting-edge scholarship from around the globe in all historical periods. The journal also promotes comparative and transnational methods and approaches to historical construction of gender as they shape and are in turn shaped by women's experiences.

We are joined today by the Journal's editors, Sandy Holguín and Jennifer Davis. Jennifer Davis is associate professor of history and women's and gender studies at The University of Oklahoma. A social and cultural historian of early modern France, she has published on religious dietary laws, public cooks, gender and work in urban France, and egalitarian movements in the revolutionary Atlantic. She regularly teaches courses on European history, women's and gender history, and historical methods. She is the author of *Defining Culinary Authority: The Transformation of Cooking in France, 1650 to 1830* from Louisiana State University Press. Sandy Holguín is a professor of history at The University of Oklahoma. She teaches a wide variety of courses for the history department and the women's and gender studies program in European intellectual history, European feminist thought, contemporary feminist thought, women and gender in Europe, and courses on the history of Spain. She has published two books, *Flamenco Nation: The Construction of National Identity* and *Creating Spaniards: Culture and National Identity in Republican Spain*, both from University of Wisconsin Press.

Thank you so much for joining us today Jennifer and Sandy, we appreciate your time.

Sandy Holguín

Thanks for having us.

Mary Alice Yeskey

For our listeners who might not be familiar with it, can you give us a little background on the *Journal of Women's History*? How did the journal start?

Sandy Holguín

I guess I'll take that one. It was founded in the spring of 1989 by U.S. women's historians Joan Hoff Wilson and Christine Farnham, and what they said in their preface to the original journal was that the field of women's history had grown so dramatically since the 1970s, but that the information about women's history had been dispersed throughout many, many different kinds of journals, like signs and feminist studies, and the fact that at the time, the *American Historical Review* only published about 10% of articles that had to do with women's history, they wanted a new place to house all of the different kinds of women's history that was going on around the country and around the world. And so, this was, they wanted to talk about the cutting-edge scholarship, newest methodologies and so they all wanted it in one place where they could have these debates. So, that's basically how it started.

Mary Alice Yeskey

And, what would you say sets the *Journal of Women's History* apart from other women's studies journals or history journals?

Jennifer Davis

So, I would love to weigh in on this. I think that from the first issue that Sandy's mentioning to the present day the data we reach has profiled the diversity of women's experiences across time and space, right. And so that's been described using really different terms in probably each decade, right. Do you use the word global? Do you use the word international? There are problems, right, with all of those terms and those terms can imply a kind of hierarchy that maybe existed, maybe didn't exist, maybe exists now and isn't accurate for the past, right. And so, most recently we have been using the term transnational, right, which really grows out of post-colonial studies to critique the systems of nation states, right, and transnational allows folks to talk about, you know, person to person or philanthropic relationships that exceed national boundaries, for example. You can talk about state formations, you can talk about extra state formations, right. It just is a little bit more flexible of a term. So, we're now describing ourselves as a transnational, a journal for transnational women's history.

What we mean by that is we take places from all times all places (laughs) and really ask our scholars to reflect on that broader field and a comparative context for their scholarship, right. So, I think that's kind of our first difference, right, is that we really are expecting folks to be able to talk to each other across a wide expanse of time and space. Second, I think the JWH in the past and to the present day provides a forum for scholars from all over the world. If you take a look at our submissions, right, we have really substantial submission rates from outside of the U.S. and that's with institutional base that's solidly in the United States, right. And our board of editors, we really strive to make sure that we represent both a diversity of institutions within the U.S. and also in international representation as well.

That we are an English language publication has both positives and negatives, right, when you want to be talking to people all around the world that's going to exclude some people. And so, folks in 1989 recognized that, that's been a challenge that the journal has really, journal editors

have grappled with for the entire time of its publication, and we've got a few ideas in the works to address that challenge directly in the next couple of years. So, those are kind of our two big things, right. We want to profile women's experience across time and space, we want to provide a forum for scholars all over the world, and then third, I think that we and our reviewers are really dedicated to working with junior scholars, to graduate students, that we see that as the place where the most cutting-edge scholarship is happening and we want to be the place to really lift that work up and help those folks build their career.

Mary Alice Yeskey

Thank you, and I love every time you say time and space, I just think of, like, female astronauts, like, yes, I love it.

Sandy Holguín

The *Doctor Who* for women's history.

Mary Alice Yeskey

Thank you, that's exactly, yes. I'm among my peers right now. *Doctor Who* references, yup, thank you so much.

The latest issue of the journal featured a pretty dramatic cover redesign. Can you tell us about how that decision came about to update your cover?

Sandy Holguín

Well, I think part of it had to do with the fact that, the journal had been at SUNY Binghamton for ten years and I don't think it had an update since then. And we thought, well, we're new editors at a new place. We'd like to start fresh with a new cover. So, that was part of the process. I'll let Jennifer continue and I'll jump in.

Jennifer Davis

So, Sandy and I in taking the journal on, I think realized we complement each other. She is very visual and has a great sense of design, and I do not really (laughs). I really, I can kind of make my way through, like, putting two colors together, but that's about the extent of my skills. So, this whole process of bringing the journal to OU, building the website, was very visual, and Sandy really took the lead and I kind of acted as a sounding board for her vision of a very clear clean design, right. We took a lot of what we learned from the website, about what do we like, what works aesthetically? And we brought that to the designers at Johns Hopkins Press. So, they would come to us with cover design ideas and we were very opinionated (laughs) about what would work for this journal and what we were communicating through design and what absolutely we couldn't, you know, what we needed to have.

I will say just one thing about the cover features a piece of fabric, right, and we really found that in looking for symbols to communicate women's experience across time and space (laughs), right. It's very hard to find good images that can speak across those differences, right. Differences of race and class and ethnicity, and those differences are woven into fabrics, right. But from our perspective fabric, which so often is the product of women's labor, fabric was a way to connect with women's work of the past and also aesthetic ideals of the past without focusing, like, on bodies or stereotypes or images that maybe do as much damage as they can help us imagine the communities of women that create and that are the subjects of our analysis, right. So, fabric ended up being this really important place for us to mine, you know, different university archives and different library archives have just phenomenal collections of fabrics from all over the world. You know, we have a millennia of fabric designs in archives and that's such a rich resource to really draw on for women's historians and we haven't, you know, sat down and written the article about it or anything, but that's why this particular image was chosen, right. We just thought that could give a link to our ongoing discussion about material culture and women's lives, women's experiences.

Sandy Holguín

Right, and it's abstracted enough that it covers that whole thing as Jennifer said about across time and space. And I do want to correct her, I'm about the most non-visual person that there is out there, but I have a good sense of color and because of my certain cognitive disabilities, I need clean lines, and so that's what came in. Cause if you look at my desk, it's severely cluttered right now and any place that I touch is cluttered, but for me to get visual information clearly, I need an uncluttered visual space. So, that for me was important with the website design. If there are too many things sticking up, I get too distracted and I can't find what it is I need to find. So, that was part of the goal as well.

Mary Alice Yeskey

I think the fabric metaphor is just so elegant and just such an excellent choice. That, what struck me most about the cover was when I saw it right away, it's just it's beautiful, and it's modern, and it's not just, like, a plain, there are so many journals where it's basically just the name of the journal and the issue and volume number, and that's it. And it's just so aesthetically pleasing, but everything you just said Jennifer, about the reasoning behind your decision, just shows and just what an elegant solution that was, just design-wise. I think using a textile was just such an apt choice for this journal.

Sandy Holguín

Thank you.

Mary Alice Yeskey

You mentioned that along with the cover redesign, you recently just redesigned and relaunched a brand-new website. Can you tell us a little bit about that process as well, did that come first

and the cover came afterwards, and how did the website come to be its brand sparkling new self?

Sandy Holguín

Well, it did come before the cover, and we started thinking about it as soon as we heard that we were going to get the journal because we wanted to publicize the journal in ways that it hadn't been done before. We realized that that everybody has to have a website. It has to be current and it has to be accessible. We wanted it to be accessible to many different kinds of audiences that students, undergraduates, graduate students, scholars, and we wanted to have everything in there. And in terms of the design, it was similar to the cover design. I needed clean lines. I, every time I go on a website, I'm very, I'm a judgmental person.

Mary Alice Yeskey

It's a safe space, so am I (laughs).

Sandy Holguín

(laughs) I get on there and say, like, I can't find the search button, and I just kept telling them, we need to have a really prominent search button and I don't want too much on the front. I want to be able to sort of go into the sections that we need to go in and we need to have those lined up. And unfortunately, because, and I'm sure Jennifer is the same way, because we were trained as researchers we tend to research things to death. So, I researched websites to death in terms of what I thought was good, what was bad, and then Jennifer and I talked a lot about it and tried to figure out which sections we needed to have on there, on the website. And that's evolving, and we say that on our site that we continue to evolve. If you have suggestions, this is the kind of thing we want to do, but we wanted to be accessible to different sorts of audiences, and we're kind of hoping that our website does that.

Jennifer Davis

Yeah, I should give a shout out to the amazing staff support that we had here at The University of Oklahoma from the digital scholarship lab, and Tara Carlisle was the kind of staff member who managed our panics and calls all throughout the spring that we were setting this up, you know, so we had several face-to-face meetings with her pre-COVID and then we really were panicking, right, as we were set to take the journal up in June 2020 and March 2020 looked like it was going to really throw everything under the bus, right. We didn't know if we would be prepared to launch the website, if she would be able to do the work that she needed to do, if we would be able to do our work. And she really kind of held our hands through that month of uncertainty as our work needed to continue even in the midst of that, like, just tremendous uncertainty which, like, it can be hard to remember even just a year out, how much the world stopped in March 2020 and how unclear it was, whether there would be funding for a digital scholarship lab, right, for the following year. And we knew that that was going to be an essential component of our broader editorial team.

Sandy Holguín

And John Stewart too, we need to thank him as well.

Jennifer Davis

Yeah, John Stewart and Tara Carlisle, just like amazing, amazing tech support that we've had here. So, in terms of building out the website, I think both of us took full responsibility for that, right. All decisions were made by consensus, if one of us loved something and one of us hated it, there was no question. We were not going to go with that, and both of us had very different pieces that we built-out. Right. So, I think I took the lead on the podcast. Sandy really took the lead on the teaching resources. We've traded off, we have a fantastic crew of undergraduate interns who have worked with the journal for the past year and a half and a lot of their labor is evident on the website as well.

Sandy Holguín

We also have an author's blog, which is a nice way to publicize the authors that are in the current issue of the journal, talking about various kinds of things, archival work, or particular primary source, all sorts of things like that. So, that's also been really helpful.

Jennifer Davis

And that's been a place where folks can bring, you know, non-English primary sources to the readers, right. And that's, I just love that. I think that's a really great way to kind of show the work that we do as historians.

Mary Alice Yeskey

You mentioned your podcast. Can you tell our listeners a little bit more about that?

Jennifer Davis

So, every month or so we record a new conversation with an area expert and an author of a recent book and we contribute to the gender studies channel on the *New Books Network*, it's such a phenomenal partnership. So, they provide all the tech support, and we scout out the new, interesting content in the field. So, this is a new endeavor for the journal, but we really love it because the podcast provides a space for us to basically celebrate a huge achievement in a scholar's career, which is the publication of their book, and our amazing book review editor, professor Jennifer Holland at The University of Oklahoma, she does a fantastic job pulling together the print book reviews. But I don't know if folks know this, all book reviews in the *Journal of Women's History* are multiple books. So, they are both, orientation to recent publications but they end up being these kind of mini state-of-the-field essays so rich, so productive and so labor intensive, right. So, they take a while to come to press. The podcast turnaround time is so quick.

So, if you go to our website, you'll see all of our episodes from the past year, we've talked with Pamela Nadell, Honorée Fanonne Jeffers whose poetry envisioning the life and times of the African-American poet Phillis Wheatley Peters has won national poetry and history awards. We chatted with our colleague, Jennifer Holland, about her new book, Julie Hardwick, Amanda Scott, Lessie Jo Frazier, Cathleen Cahill, Linda Heidenreich, Nicola Pratt, Tiffany Florvil, and we have two more scheduled for this month. So, we're not slowing down. So, we coordinate with the experts in the field who conduct the interviews and these podcasts enable all of our listeners to hear more about the research and writing process from the author. So, just as an example, I chatted with Julie Hardwick about her recent book, about sex and sexuality between young workers in old regime France, and she told us this incredible story about an object that she found in the dossiers for the Foundling hospital in Leon, which really informed her methodology. So, it's this little pink ribbon, right, that's embroidered and beaded, and it has this saying in little beadwork that says "I'm going away, but not leaving you" in French, right. So, she left this ribbon with her baby that she left at the Foundling hospital, and Julie found this in the archives and just was like, I must do something. I must bring this so that people know, right. Like, maternal love and angst and grief, right. All of this is kind of more memorialized in this object, and of course, you can read drier documents, right, and try to recover that emotional life of people in the past. But there are so many little stories, I think, that historians will reveal when they're at dinner, right, if they're just chatting about their work, that don't end up making their way into the scholarship itself, and I think the podcast is just this great place for us to kind of archive some of those conversations about the relationships that we build with the people that we study.

Mary Alice Yeskey

What a great story, and I totally agree, I think to have to have a place where the lived experience of the historian can be talked about. And I mean, like, we all were making the same face of emotion and excitement and tears in my eyes about the beaded bracelet. I'm like, oh my goodness. Yeah, that's just, that's such a valuable place to hold those conversations. I will absolutely put a link to your podcast in the write-up for this one so that our listeners can, as soon as you're done talking with us, can go right over to there and listen to some of these really fascinating episodes. Thank you for that. Can you tell us what's coming up in your next issue?

Sandy Holguín

I can, cause I have the table of contents rights in front of me (laughs).

Mary Alice Yeskey

Outstanding (laughs).

Sandy Holguín

So, we do an editorial note where we try to summarize what is going on in the journal itself and we try to make connections with all the articles, even if they don't seem like they have

connections so that the title of that one is *Rebellion: Gender Roles and Discourses in Historical Memories of War and Peace*. And so, when I was writing up this particular editorial note I was trying to figure out where do all these very disparate articles, how do they belong with one another? And this is actually one of my strengths, is finding similarities in things that aren't really similar at all, but I can bring them together (laughs). So, we have two articles that are dealing with ways in which women have rebelled across time and space. So, we have an article about gendered perceptions of rebellious women in late medieval Flemish Chronicles, and these are about spies and instigators and troublemakers. Then what I grouped with that one was a person who wrote about novels in the interwar period in Turkey and Italy, and it's called "Bad Romance: Toxic Masculinity, Love and Heartbreak, and Interwar Italian and Turkish Women's Novels".

Mary Alice Yeskey

What a title.

Sandy Holguín

Yeah, that's a great title, isn't it? So, both of those works deal with these kinds of troublemaker women or women who cannot be troublemakers, like, within a fascist regime, but can explore being rebellious within the framework of a novel. Then we have a work on mountain climbing, which you probably didn't realize was a feminine utopia in the 19th century. So, this is "A Feminine Utopia: Mountain Climbing, Gender, and Women's Rights in 19th Century America". And you've got your votes for women in the background, I see there. So, this article actually is going to have a picture with somebody who has plastered a votes for women sign on the top of a mountain in, I want to say Katmandu right now but I could be remembering incorrectly, but they went to these tops of the mountains, and they put these things up there, but it was really about how this idea of women's mountain climbing gave us space, gave women space for thinking about women's suffrage., and so there's this link that that person is making with that.

Mary Alice Yeskey

You're right, I would not have ever put suffrage and mountain climbing in the same sentence.

Sandy Holguín

No, no, me neither. Then we've got something about the Monuments Men in history and memory. That is the people who during World War II when the Nazis had plundered a lot of art and hidden it in places, these are the basically Americans and the French, primarily who went in and tried to protect these works of art and treasures and to get them out of enemy hands and protect them later on. But this has been masculinized in the form of Monuments Men. There's that movie that came out in the 2000s, called *Monuments Men*, had a Clooney in it, but what this person is arguing is that there were a lot of women who also worked then and have been erased from the narrative, so this person's bringing women back into the narrative. And then the last two articles are about, interestingly enough, one is a revisionist history about liberal

and socialist collaboration in the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and that article is saying that the way we've discussed socialist and liberal women in the past has been to kind of separate them and say, oh, they had nothing in common, but in fact there's a revisionist history that's saying, actually socialist and liberal women collaborated on many kinds of things and they had many more similarities than we're aware of, and the final article is called "Basically Feminist: Women's Strike for Peace, Maternal Peace Activism, and Memory of The Women's Peace Movement", and again it's another one of these ideas that the way that the women's strike for peace has basically been written about is that they were a feminist organization, but in fact, in the early years they were not so much what tended to be maternalist organization and they often rejected feminists at the beginning. So, this is a revisionist history also about this movement. Then we have this exciting article or essay about digital historical practices. We're picking up this historical practices segment from the previous editors which is where historians can look at historical practice, what do they do in the historical classroom, what do they do when they're writing and when they're in archive, and this one is by Michelle Moravec is about digital historical practices. What kinds of things can you answer doing digital history? What kinds of questions? What is it good for? And then we finally end it with three book review essays having to do with medicalizing modern motherhood in the Americas, historicizing fat, and gender, family, and French political life. That is the contents.

Mary Alice Yeskey

That sounds outstanding, and when do we think we might see that issue published?

Sandy Holguín

In, is it June or July?

Mary Alice Yeskey

This summer.

Sandy Holguín

This summer, yes.

Mary Alice Yeskey

We can say coming this summer.

Sandy Holguín

Coming this summer, yes, it's the summer issue.

Mary Alice Yeskey

(laughs) Excellent, excellent. Well, thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today, this has been such a delight and I will put links to your gorgeous new website as well as your podcast so our listeners can go there to get more information, we really appreciate your time today.

[Sandy Holguín](#)

Well, thank you. This was a pleasure for me, certainly.

[Jennifer Davis](#)

Thank you so much, it really was fun to talk about the work we've put into it and the work that we see coming up.