The Archive and the Festival

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KEYWORDS

archive
repertoire
early modern festivals
royal entry
Philip III
Lisbon
colonial Latin America
Potosí
Minas Gerais
agency
black brotherhoods
digital humanities

ABSTRACT

This article offers a brief overview and assessment of the opportunities and challenges that written, visual, and digital records hold for the study of early modern festivals, using Diana Taylor's terminology of the "archive" and the "repertoire" and examples from colonial Latin American and early modern Iberian festivals as points of departure. While archival records are far from transparent records of the events, they can help to illuminate the multiple, sometimes conflicting agendas behind both the festivals and their pictorial or textual representation. Digital archives promise to make early modern festivals more broadly accessible for comprehensive and comparative study, but they carry their own risks by disconnecting both researchers and records from the embodied presence of contemporary festive repertoires.

1. Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 22.

2. Roy Strong, *Art and Power: Renaissance Festivals, 1450–1650* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); José Antonio Maravall, *La cultura del barroco: Análisis de una estructura histórica* (Barcelona: Editorial Ariel, 1975); Alejandro Cañeque, *The King's Living Image: The Culture and Politics of Viceregal Power in Colonial Mexico* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Linda A. Curcio-Nagy, *The Great Festivals of Colonial Mexico City: Performing Power and Identity* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004); and Ángel López Cantos, *Juegos, fiestas y diversiones en la América Española* (Madrid: Editora MAPFRE, 1992).

3. Teófilo Ruiz, *The King Travels: Festive Traditions in Late Medieval and Early Modern Spain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 31.

4. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 58.

5. *Ibid.*, 87.

6. For example, Carolyn Dean shows how indigenous Andeans performed Inca and non-Inca identities in Corpus Christi festivals in Cuzco, Peru, as a way of asserting their status in colonial society (Carolyn Dean,

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In *The Archive and the Repertoire*, performance studies scholar Diana Taylor demarcates two spheres of knowledge transmission—the *archive* of durable records and artifacts, from texts to visual art to architecture, and the *repertoire* of ephemeral, embodied practices, such as dance, ritual, and performance—in a way that is both productive and problematic for the study of festivals in the early modern period, which is the focus of my research (1500–1800). While early modern festivals clearly belong to the category of the repertoire, our only access to those that occurred hundreds of years ago is through the archive (texts, illustrations, paintings) that recorded them. The same could be said, of course, for the study of any past event, but it is the political agency and objectives that tend to get attached to these two spheres that raise questions about their use for the study of early modern festivals. Taylor acknowledges that the classification “too readily falls into a binary, with the written and archival constituting hegemonic power and the repertoire providing the anti-hegemonic challenge,” even though, as she points out, “performance belongs to the strong as well as the weak.”¹ Indeed, since at least the publication of Roy Strong’s aptly named *Art and Power: Renaissance Festivals, 1450–1650* in 1973 and (closer to my own field) José Antonio Maravall’s *La cultura del barroco* in 1975, scholars have tended to focus on how public festivals in early modern Europe and its overseas empires served to project and protect the power of royal, religious, and civic authorities.² Of course, the festival archive—the texts and images that preserved the celebrations for posterity—was no less the purview of the powerful; as Teófilo Ruiz affirms regarding festivals in medieval and early modern Spain, “those who wrote, who had their works printed, and whose works survived were almost all imbricated into the structures that underpinned and justified royal and municipal power.”³ Early modern festive repertoires and their archives thus less readily fall into a binary of hegemonic power and anti-hegemonic challenge, for both seem to correspond to what anthropologist James C. Scott calls the “public transcript”: “the self-portrait of dominant elites as they would have themselves seen”—seen not only by spectators but also by the readers of festival accounts, we might add.⁴

The study of early modern festivals can challenge the application of a hegemonic/anti-hegemonic binary to archive and repertoire in another way, as well. More recent studies, mine included, have found multiple non-hegemonic motives and meanings in festivals and their accounts, not so much by uncovering a “hidden transcript”—disguised or out of view of the powerful⁵—but by showing how non-elite groups participated in public celebrations and even the publication of festival accounts in ways that served their own purposes, even if they did not necessarily subvert those of the elite.⁶ But if early modern festivals can help to complicate assumptions about a political opposition between *archive* and *repertoire*, what—turning the question around—can these terms contribute to the study of early modern festivals? First and foremost, the distinction is useful to a literary scholar like myself who is used to treating archival representations as objects of study in themselves, and not simply as an imperfect medium for the ephemeral repertoire they document. Whereas Scott’s “public transcript” appropriates a metaphor of writing (“transcript”) to articulate a notion of performance (“Nothing conveys the public transcript more as the dominant would like it to seem than the formal ceremonies they organize to celebrate and dramatize their rule”⁷), Taylor’s distinction encourages us to avoid such

Inka Bodies and the Body of Christ: Corpus Christi in Colonial Cuzco, Peru [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999]). Similarly, black and indigenous members of lay religious brotherhoods used their sponsorship of and participation in religious festivals as a way to promote their communities; see the example of the Black Brotherhood of Our Lady of the Rosary's publication of a festival account in section 3 below, which I analyze in more detail in chapter 4 of my *Spectacular Wealth: The Festivals of Colonial South American Mining Towns* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016).

7. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 58.

8. On this series of paintings, see Dean, *Inka Bodies and the Body of Christ*.

9. It is now held in the Museo de América in Madrid.

10. João Baptista Lavanha, *Viagem da Catholica Real Magestade del Rey D. Filipe II. N. S. ao reyno de Portugal e rellação do solene recebimento que nelle se lhe fez* (Madrid: Tomas Junti, 1622). Philip III of Spain was Philip II of Portugal, the second of the Hapsburg kings to hold the Portuguese crown after Philip II claimed it in 1580.

11. Ruiz, *King Travels*, 31; and Ana Paula Torres Megiani, *O Rei Ausente: Festa e Cultura Política nas Visitas dos Filipes a Portugal (1581 e 1619)* (São Paulo: Alameda, 2004).

a conflation and to think about the different agendas at work in each sphere. In what follows, I highlight four dimensions of the challenges and opportunities of the archive, broadly understood, for the study of early modern festive repertoires. Although I use examples from my work on festivals in colonial Latin America and early modern Iberia, the promise and pitfalls of the archive are far from unique to these contexts.

1. The archive of festivals is broad and diverse.

In relation to festivals, "archival sources" usually call to mind the administrative records—the *actas de cabildo*, or proceedings of town council meetings, account books, petitions, royal orders, and confraternity statutes—that prescribed and described the festive occasions that were repeated yearly as well as those that celebrated unique events, such as a bishop's entry or a royal marriage. Certainly such documents are critical for understanding the festive practices of the early modern period, but Taylor's broader sense of the archive extends to the visual and textual records that were created specifically for the purpose of conserving the memory of the ephemeral event and expanding its audience to those who were not there to witness it—widening its impact in time and space, so to speak. Paintings sometimes offered idealized representations of annual festivals, such as the series depicting Corpus Christi processions in late seventeenth-century Cuzco, Peru, which were displayed in a local parish church.⁸ Or paintings were created as grandiose "souvenirs" of a particular festival, like the Andean artist Melchor Pérez Holguín's *Entry of Archbishop Morcillo* (1718), which depicts three different moments of the festivities surrounding the archbishop-vice-roy's entry into the South American silver mining town of Potosí and which at some point made its way to Spain.⁹ Textual accounts of festivals extend from private letters to anonymous octavo-sized pamphlets to lavishly illustrated official festival books like João Baptista Lavanha's account of Philip III's entry into Lisbon in 1619, *Viagem da Catholica Real Magestade del Rey D. Filipe II N.S. ao reyno de Portugal*.¹⁰ A royally appointed engineer, cosmographer, and historian, Lavanha was certainly "imbricated into the structures that underpinned and justified royal ... power," but the dozens of other published accounts of the 1619 entry offer a large corpus with which to compare his version.¹¹ Philip III's entry is one of the few cases I have studied where visual depictions are extant as well, as described below. Another is the aforementioned entry of Archbishop-Viceroy Morcillo into Potosí, which was portrayed not only in Holguín's painting but also in an official account written by Augustinian friar Juan de la Torre at the behest of the organizers and published in Lima in the same year as the entry, as well as in two chapters of Bartolomé Arzáns de Orsúa y Vela's voluminous history of Potosí, *Historia de la Villa Imperial de Potosí*, completed in 1737 but never published in the author's lifetime.¹² The differences between these diverse representations of the same event are just as illuminating as their similarities. Like Lavanha's official account, de la Torre's surely tells us, as Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly writes, "how the body that commissioned the festival and the festival book wished the festival to be interpreted and how that body wanted to be seen in present and future times."¹³ Yet the details emphasized in the painting (for example, the indigenous woman in the foreground whose dialogue with a male Spanish companion is transcribed in speech scrolls) and in Arzáns's history (for example, the irresponsibility and greed of a local official who shirked his duty to pay for the celebrations, and of the viceroy himself) offer much different visions of the bodies and individuals involved in the festival, promoting some and demoting others.¹⁴ However inaccessible ephemeral festivities may be to us today, the multiple archival representations that

12. Bartolomé Arzáns de Orsúa y Vela, *Historia de la Villa Imperial de Potosí*, ed. Lewis Hanke and Gunnar Mendoza, 3 vols. (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1965). Arzáns identifies Juan de la Torre, who composed the music performed in the festival, as the one who “a petición de la Villa escribió la relación de esta entrada, recibimiento y fiestas” (at the request of the Town ... wrote the relation of this entry, reception and festivities) (vol. 3, 11). All translations in this article are mine. The references to festivals in Potosí and Minas Gerais, Brazil, in this article are derived from my 2016 book, *Spectacular Wealth*; references to festivals in Lisbon are derived from the introduction to the same book, my 2011 article (“Imperial Celebrations, Local Triumphs: The Rhetoric of Festival Accounts in the Portuguese Empire,” *Hispanic Review* 79, no. 1 [2011]: 17–41); and research conducted in Lisbon in 2015–16 under the auspices of a Fulbright Scholar Grant and a Gulbenkian Foundation Fellowship.

13. Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly, “The Early Modern Festival Book: Function and Form,” in *Europa Triumphans: Court and Civic Festivals in Early Modern Europe*, ed. J. R. Mulryne, Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly, and Margaret Shewring (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004), 1:15.

14. For a discussion of those details, see my *Spectacular Wealth*, chapters 2 and 4.

15. Miguel Soromenho, “A ‘Joyeuse Entrée’ de 1619,” in *Joyeuse Entrée: A Vista de Lisboa*

they generated are ripe for investigation and comparison, which can reveal conflicts and tensions that the festival and its official account were designed to disguise.

2. The archive is not a transparent record of festivals.

Distinguishing between archive and repertoire thus encourages us to pay attention to the different agendas and perspectives apparent in those sources, rather than to use them to try to reconstruct what really happened in the festival. Two examples related to Philip III’s entry into Lisbon in 1619 illustrate the error of interpreting the archive as an accurate reflection of prior festivities. Besides the engravings in Lavanha’s account, the entry is also represented visually in an anonymous painting, *View of Lisbon with the Entry of Philip II of Portugal*, held at Weilburg Castle in Germany, which prominently and curiously identifies the year of the entry as 1613. Rather than a mistake, the date probably indicates that the painting was a “preview” of the 1619 entry, created at a time when the king’s visit was already being planned at the instigation of the Portuguese elite. Indeed, as art historian Miguel Soromenho has argued, rather than representing an entry that already happened, the painting may have been part of Portuguese efforts to convince the king to make the visit.¹⁵ The resemblance between the painting and Lavanha’s illustrations would thus not be due to the artists’ efforts to reproduce the same reality but to the influence of one of those representations on reality.

We can find a comparable textual example in another account of Philip III’s entry, João Sardinha Mimoso’s *Relacion de la real tragicomedia con que los padres de la Compañia de Iesus en su Colegio de S. Anton de Lisboa recibieron a la Magestad Catolica de Felipe II de Portugal*, which transcribes the play staged for the king at the Jesuit College of Santo Antão and describes the performance and the rest of the entry.¹⁶ Mimoso writes that at one point, when a scene was left out because they were running short on time, the king—who was looking closely at a book he held in his hands and comparing it with what he saw—ordered the play to stop and follow what was in the book.¹⁷ Here again we have an example in which the archive precedes and even shapes the repertoire, rather than the reverse. Both instances offer the important reminder that the archive should not be read as a documentary record of a specific festival, nor should it be judged by the fidelity of its representation. Nevertheless, the archive can render ample evidence of how the repertoire was imagined, as well as how it shaped that imaginary. If Philip III wanted the festival he encountered in Lisbon to conform to what he found in a book, perhaps he—or others—also hoped that it would correspond to the prospective painting dated 1613.

3. Like the repertoire, the archive does not only belong to the powerful.

The festival archive can thus have an agenda—and even an existence—independent of those of the festival itself. But does Ruiz’s claim—that “those who wrote, who had their works printed, and whose works survived were almost all imbricated into the structures that underpinned and justified royal and municipal power”¹⁸—mean that the different perspectives offered by printed works only reflect the competition and negotiation for power among elite individuals and groups? As already suggested, in at least one instance in my work on festivals in colonial South American mining towns, I was able to highlight the intervention in the archive of a decidedly non-elite organization: the Irmandade da Nossa Senhora do Rosário dos Pretos (Black Brotherhood of Our Lady of the Rosary), a Catholic lay brotherhood composed mainly of enslaved Africans and

do Castelo de Weilburg (Lisbon: Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, 2015), 34.

16. João Sardinha Mimoso, *Relación de la real tragicomedia con que los padres de la Compañía de Jesus en su Colegio de S. Anton de Lisboa recibieron a la Magestad Catolica de Felipe II de Portugal, y de su entrada en este Reino, con lo que se hizo en las Villas, Ciudades en que entró* (Lisbon: Jorge Rodrigues, 1620).

17. Ibid., 63r.

18. Ruiz, *King Travels*, 31.

19. Simão Ferreira Machado, *Triunfo Eucharistico, Exemplar da Christandade Lusitana na pública exaltação da Fé na solemne Trasladação do Divinissimo Sacramento da Igreja da Senhora do Rosario, para hum novo Templo da Senhora do Pilar em Villa Rica, Corte da Capitania das Minas, in Resíduos Seiscentistas em Minas: Textos do Século do Ouro e as Projeções do Mundo Barroco*, ed. Affonso Ávila (Belo Horizonte: Centro de Estudos Mineiros, 1967), 1:131–283.

20. Watanabe-O’Kelly, “Early Modern Festival Book,” 15.

21. Machado, *Triunfo Eucharistico*, 138–39.

22. Joseph dos Santos Cosme e Damião, *Sermam de S. Gonsalo Garcia, pregado no terceiro dia do solemnissimo Triduo, que celebraraõ os homens pardos da cidade da Bahia na Cathedral da mesma Cidade* (Lisbon: Miguel Rodrigues, 1747). I thank my

Afro-descendants, whose chapter in Vila Rica, Minas Gerais (Brazil), sponsored the publication of a festival account and collectively signed its dedication. This account, Simão Ferreira Machado’s *Triunfo Eucharistico*, describes the celebrations surrounding the transfer of the Eucharist from its temporary home in the Black Brotherhood of the Rosary’s church to its permanent home in Vila Rica’s main parish church after it was rebuilt in 1733, due to the population boom as a result of the gold rush in the region (fueled by the forced labor of black slaves).¹⁹ Although the black brotherhood’s role in the publication of *Triunfo Eucharistico* is rarely acknowledged by scholars, the title page and the prefatory material are quite explicit about its contribution. The title page attributes not only the dedication but also the decision to publish the work to the brotherhood: “Dedicado a Soberana Senhora do Rosario / Pelos irmãos pretos da sua irmandade, / e a instancia dos mesmos exposto á publica noticia” (Dedicated to the Sovereign Lady of the Rosary / By the black brothers of her brotherhood / and at their insistence exposed to public notice) (my emphasis). In the dedication, the members of the Black Brotherhood of the Rosary reveal how they—like the festival book authors described by Watanabe-O’Kelly—“wished the festival to be interpreted and how that body wanted to be seen in present and future times”²⁰: “Esta consideração nos obrigou a solicitar esta publica escriptura, em que sempre o nosso affecto esteja referindo em perpetua lembrança, e continua narração aos presentes, e futuros toda a ordem de tão magnifica solemnidade” (This consideration obliged us to solicit this public writing, in which our affection will always be referred in perpetual memory, and such magnificent solemnity in all of its order will be continuously narrated to those in the present and the future).²¹ The Black Brotherhood of the Rosary, in other words, self-consciously turned to print publication (the archive) to make sure that their display of devotion was more enduring than the festival itself (the repertoire). The mixed-race members of a *pardo* (mulatto) brotherhood in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, may have had similar motives for dedicating (and perhaps sponsoring) the publication of a sermon proffered during the celebration of Gonçalo Garcia, a mixed-race saint, in their city: *Sermam de S. Gonsalo Garcia, pregado no terceiro dia do solemnissimo Triduo, que celebraraõ os homens pardos da cidade da Bahia ... dedicado ... pelos irmãos, e devotos de S. Gonsalo Garcia*, published in Lisbon in 1747.²² Like *Triunfo Eucharistico*, the *Sermam* explicitly praises a corporate rather than a singular identity; both the black and *pardo* brotherhoods appropriated the archive to defend and preserve their otherwise marginalized community’s deeds, rights, and reputations.²³

4. Digitizing the archive carries risks as well as rewards for research.

Despite the richness of the archival materials sketched in the foregoing paragraphs, much more can and should be made available to a wider range of scholars through the expansion of the digital archive. Far more common than black sponsors of publications were black participants and performers in festivals: in the accounts of Philip III’s entry into Lisbon, for example, we can find a description of a “naturally dark-skinned” student-actor who sings in Africanized Spanish and strums his guitar “al modo de los negros rudos y boçales” (in the manner of new, black slaves), as well as a reference to Philip III’s great delight at watching a girl dance on the shoulders of a black man.²⁴ When his father Philip II visited Lisbon in 1581–82, he wrote to his daughters about watching blacks dance in the streets below his bedroom window.²⁵ These fleeting references to the repertoire of black festive performance confirm the claims made by contemporary residents of and visitors to Lisbon about the significant black population in the city, some 10 percent of its residents.²⁶

former advisee Miguel Valerio
(now assistant professor at
Washington University-St. Louis)
for bringing this work to my
attention.

23. For similar examples in
another context, see Joanna
Brooks, who shows how blacks
entered the public sphere in
the early United States through
"positive collective incorporation":
festivals, parades, and
processions (the repertoire) and
print publication (the archive),
both organized by corporate
institutions like black Masonic
lodges and churches (Joanna
Brooks, "The Early American
Public Sphere and the Emergence
of a Black Print Counterpublic,"
The William and Mary Quarterly,
3rd ser., 62, no. 1 [2005]: 73).

24. Mimoso, *Relación de la real
tragicomedia*, 58r. The latter
appears in the anonymous
*Tercera relación de las grandiosas
fiestas*: "S. M. quedò bien
satisfecho, y entre otras cosas
dize[n] gustò tanto de ver bailar
una muchacha en ombros de un
negro, a que llaman pela, que la
mandò llevar consigo, y dar de
renta lò cõ que pudiesse passar.
A esta muchacha, y a su madre
conosco yo bien, por averla visto
algunas vezes, y ser unica en este
ministerio" (His Majesty felt very
satisfied, and among other things
they say he liked so much to see
a girl dance on the shoulders of a
black man, who is called *pela*, that
he ordered her to be taken with
him, and given enough income
that she can get by. I know this girl
and her mother well, having seen
them sometimes, and because
she is unique in this department.).
Tercera relación de las grandiosas

Because of the brevity of the allusions across a multitude of texts, a comprehensive and comparative analysis of black festive repertoire in early modern Portugal is a daunting task. Fortunately, a project led by scholars at the University of Lisbon, "Public Rituals in the Portuguese Empire (1498–1822)," will make this sort of research much more feasible.²⁷ The project's goal is to create an open-access, full text-searchable digital collection of approximately 1,000 printed books describing public festivals and rituals in the early modern Portuguese empire. The resulting database, accessible through the Biblioteca Nacional Digital of the National Library of Portugal, will complement the British Library's existing [digital archive of some 250 Renaissance European festival books](#). However, it will have the advantage of including a wider geographical range of sources—from all areas of the Portuguese empire, including Brazil and Goa, India—that will allow for greater cross-cultural comparisons and the possibility of tracing how European festive repertoires were used and adapted in extra-European contexts. Furthermore, a full text-searchable database, unlike the keyword-searchable British Library database, will open the archive to questions about the repertoire that we do not even yet know how to ask. Perhaps most important, this digital archive of mostly Portuguese-language sources will contribute to what historian Lara Putnam refers to in "The Transnational and the Text-Searchable: Digitized Sources and the Shadows They Cast" as the "sea change" that is challenging "Anglophone overrepresentation in the digitized world."²⁸

Putnam's article highlights the role of source digitization and text searchability in enabling transnational research because of how extraordinarily fast, cheap, and easy it makes it to search across multiple archives (at least for those with digital access). However, Putnam also explores the hidden costs of the "digitized turn" for historical research: fewer and shorter trips to the archives (in the traditional sense), resulting in the loss of multidimensional and experiential awareness of the places under study and the local knowledge produced there; and lack of attention to the people who "stand in the shadows"—those who were not writing, publishing, or reading the newspapers and books that may become digitized.²⁹ The notion of the repertoire can help to challenge both of these drawbacks of the digital archive. As scholars of festivals, we must keep in mind the participants and spectators who did not contribute to, and whose interests and activities were not always reflected in, archival representations. And as Taylor reminds us, "The repertoire requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by 'being there,' being part of the transmission."³⁰ Present-day festivals are not unchanging repositories of elements and practices derived from earlier periods, but they are part of a living repertoire tied to specific peoples and places. The study of festivals demands our own embodied presence in these places in order for us to begin to glimpse their meanings for past audiences and their means of transmitting knowledge to future generations. We must not let our desire for greater access to the repertoire via an expanded, more accessible, and text-searchable archive cut us off from the repertoire that continues to exist in the places we study.

fiestas, que la ciudad de Lisboa tiene prevenidas, para recibir a la Católica Magestad del Rey don Felipe III nuestro señor (Sevilla: Francisco de Lyra, 1619), 2v.

25. Felipe II, *Cartas de Felipe II a sus hijas*, ed. Fernando Bouza (Madrid: Ediciones Akal, 1998), 86.

26. On the black population of Lisbon, estimated by most scholars based on contemporary references to be around 10 percent, see Kate Lowe, "The Global Population of Renaissance Lisbon: Diversity and Its Entanglements," in *The Global City: On the Streets of Renaissance Lisbon*, ed. Annemarie Jordan Gschwend and K. J. P. Lowe (London: Paul Holberton, 2015), 61.

27. I serve on the research team of this two-year project (FCT Project PTDC/HAR-HIS/28364/2017), which is funded by Portugal's Fundação de Ciência e Tecnologia and was launched in October 2018 under the direction of Principal Investigator-Coordinator Ângela Barreto Xavier (Instituto de Ciências Sociais-Universidade de Lisboa).

28. Lara Putnam, "The Transnational and the Text-Searchable: Digitized Sources and the Shadows They Cast," *The American Historical Review* 121, no. 2 (2016): 390.

29. *Ibid.*, 391.

30. Taylor, *Archive and the Repertoire*, 20.

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HOW TO CITE

Voigt, Lisa. "The Archive and the Festival." *Journal of Festive Studies* 1, no.1 (Spring 2019): 27–35. <https://doi.org/10.33823/jfs.2019.1.1.32>

The Journal of Festive Studies (ISSN 2641–9939) is a peer-reviewed open access journal from [H-Celebration](https://h-net.org/), a network of [H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online](https://h-net.org/), and is the inaugural journal published through the [H-Net Journals](https://journals.h-net.org/) initiative. It can be found online at <https://journals.h-net.org/jfs>.