



Call for submissions Historians' Days 2026

The Future of History

In the summer of 2026, there will be cause for celebration for all historians and history enthusiasts in the Low Countries. The Historians' Days (Historicidagen) will be coming to **Leiden** for its fifth anniversary edition! During previous editions, the practice of history has been thoroughly questioned: how do we involve the wider public in historiography (Utrecht), who belongs to the profession (Groningen), where are the boundaries of the discipline (Rotterdam), and how can we transcend them (Maastricht)? Now we are focusing on the question: what does the future of our profession actually look like?

The **Royal Netherlands Historical Society (RNHS)** and **Leiden University** invite everyone involved in history to come to Leiden from August 27 to 29, 2026, to discuss the **Future of History**.

Future dilemma

The field of history faces major challenges. The digitization of sources, research methods, and education is radically changing the way we study and teach the past. In times of polarization, climate crisis, geopolitical shifts, and attacks on the rule of law and academic freedom, there remains an enormous need for people who can interpret contemporary developments from a historical perspective. At the same time, voices are emerging from

politics and society that question the raison d'être of history and undermine the value of historical knowledge (and science in general). Budget cuts threaten the survival of the discipline and the sectors of which it is a part.

In other words, the future of history is extremely uncertain. It is high time to take a close look at all these developments and their impact on the various historical disciplines. What will history look like in the future?

Brave New World?

Every era creates not only new generations of historians, but also new research topics, methods, and perspectives. Teachers, academics, local historians, archivists, curators, heritage specialists, content creators, and journalists work daily on new ways to study and interpret the past.

Society continues to show great interest in the past. Historical books and films are in high demand, and the past is also finding its way into new media such as podcasts, TikTok, and LinkedIn. This raises the question of what the role of the historian will look like in the future and how history education and research can or must change in order to remain socially relevant.

Stronghold of tradition and innovation

With the HistoriciDagen 2026, the RNHS and Leiden University are offering everyone in the field the opportunity to exchange experiences and share future perspectives. What skills will the historian of the future need? What structural shifts will take place in the coming years? Which traditions do we want to pass on to the next generation (and which not)? In which directions is historical research heading? How can education, research, and the heritage sector make themselves future-proof? How do we keep the past relevant?

Of course, the practice of history has often faced major challenges both within and outside the field. It is therefore fitting to put the future of the discipline of history in the Low Countries on the agenda at a university with a long tradition in the practice of history, and in a city rich in museums, heritage, and culture.

Let's get started!

All historians—teachers, academics, heritage specialists, local historians, archivists, and other historical specialists—in the Dutch-speaking region are invited to submit ideas for panels and activities for the 2026 Historians' Days.

In addition, we expressly invite anyone who works daily on new ways to study and interpret the past, such as local historians, content creators, TikTokkers, and journalists, to participate in this three-day historical gathering. Non-Dutch-speaking historians working in the Low Countries are also welcome to submit proposals in English.

The program consists of three different **sessions**:

1. In “**Past**”, the central question is: What examples of future-oriented work can be found in the past?
2. In “**Present**”, we welcome panels on current historical practice and how it relates to contemporary social issues.
3. In “**Future**”, the focus is on future historical practice.

Proposals may take a **traditional** form, i.e., a panel discussion with a maximum of five speakers (including the moderator) and sufficient opportunity for debate with the participants after the presentations. **Duration**: one and a half hours.

Although we embrace traditional conference formats (panels, workshops, etc.), we also explicitly invite proposals with a **free format**. These may consist of presenting or sharing knowledge in a different form, such as walks, sprints, film screenings, exhibitions, musical performances, etc. These sessions will be organized simultaneously with the other, more traditional sessions. Apart from time limits, there are no conditions for these sessions.

Duration: 45 minutes or an hour and a half.

Want to submit a proposal?

Share your expertise, projects, and ideas with other historians and history enthusiasts in Leiden by submitting a proposal of no more than 250 words to the program committee **before January 31, 2026**. You can do this individually or on behalf of a (working) group or organization. **Young historians** are encouraged to submit proposals. Proposals featuring speakers from different backgrounds, ages, genders, and organizations will be given preference.

Rules

- The proposal should be no longer than **250 words** and must include:
 - (provisional) title;
 - proposal content;
 - type of session;
 - names and organization of the speaker(s);
 - names and organization of the organizer(s) and contact details.
- Submissions can be entered between **December 1, 2025, and January 31, 2026**;
- Submissions can be made individually, as a group, or as an institution;
- Innovative presentation formats are preferred;
- Submissions can only be made via the website **www.historicidagen.nl**. Proposals sent by email will not be considered;
- All speakers must **register as participants** and are also required to pay the participation fee (speaker rate). Organizers are requested to inform the participants in their sessions of this requirement.

After the deadline, the program committee will review the proposals submitted. It will make a selection based on content, variety, and relevance. The Program Committee may reject contributions or request modifications. No correspondence will be entered into regarding this decision.