

Letter from the President of the Western Society for French History

ANDREW ROSS

Dear Readers of the *Journal of the Western Society for French History*,

Though the presence of COVID-19 continues to shape our world, with disparate impacts on our membership and beyond, 2023 may be considered the first relatively normal year for the Western Society for French History since 2020. I am pleased to report that while the pandemic might have disrupted some of our plans, the Western has emerged stronger than ever and continues to work toward fulfilling our mission to not only support research and teaching on the history of the French and Francophone worlds, but to increase equity in the profession.

We began the year by celebrating our successful Millstone-match fundraising drive. Supported by a generous \$50,000 match by David Millstone, Amy Millstone's brother, we successfully raised more than \$90,000 for new fellowships and greater support for graduate students. Thank you to everyone who donated and please consider further contributions, especially to our Mission Prize fund.

In March, we hosted the first ever completely joint Annual Conference with the Society for French Historical Studies in Detroit, MI. We had excellent attendance and it was extremely gratifying to see how many of our colleagues were able to re-connect and re-energize their research. We are committed to continuing these kinds of collaborations, including in Paris in 2025.

During the Conference, we celebrated the recipients of the first Tyler Stovall Mission Prize in a plenary session over lunch. It was thrilling to hear of the extraordinary work being done to foster inclusion and equity in the field of French and Francophone history. We also held a listening session devoted to how the WSFH can better support our colleagues outside academia and offer more mentoring opportunities. These conversations have since coalesced into a new initiative, emerging out of our engagé.e.s committee, which is devoted to building bridges between those working within and without academia. This Bridges initiative is currently moving along multiple tracks to build a new website, execute virtual programming, and research the status of French and Francophone historians more broadly. Together, this committee seeks to find new ways for the Western to support our membership's diversity.

By the time you read this, you will have had the opportunity to attend our other virtual event this fall, focusing on the politics of doing French history in the present moment. Taking place when

we normally would have held our annual conference, this event showcased the challenges we face as historians of France and the Francophone world in our teaching and scholarship, but also elevated our commitment as an organization to meet these challenges and support all our colleagues wherever they may live or work.

The Western also continues to advocate for justice and equity in the profession. We have issued statements on racial justice protests in France and on the Supreme Court decision striking down Affirmative Action. We have signed onto several letters drafted by the American Historical Association opposing the exclusion of LGBTQ+ history in classrooms and “divisive concepts” bills. I have also written to administrators in my capacity as President of the Western supporting colleagues in departments threatened by cuts to majors.

Finally, we are pleased that the return of conferences meant the resumption of our paper prizes. We celebrate the recipients of the Millstone, Ronald S. Love, and Edward T. Gargan Prizes for advancing the field of French and Francophone history. You can find the full list at our website.

The Western has held a special place in my heart since I first started attending as a graduate student. As I prepare to hand off the presidency to Emily Marker, I am happy to report that it remains as strong as ever.