

**Urban History Group**  
**University of Wolverhampton, 26-27 March 2015**

The call for papers for the next Urban History Group Conference examines knowledge in the city, namely how the city produces, disseminates, consumes and shapes knowledge.

Deadline for submission is 30 September 2014.

Keynote Speaker: Dr Matt Houlbrook, University of Birmingham

Structure: The conference welcomes papers from experienced researchers as well as those from new researchers and a limited number of first-year PhD students.

Website: <http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/urbanhistory/uhg>

**'Urban Knowledge'**

"You take delight not in a city's seven or seventy wonders,  
but in the answer it gives to a question of yours."

This quotation from Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* illustrates the ways in which urban places stimulate the production of knowledge. Cities have long been the locus of information-gathering both on a municipal and on an individual scale. Developing ways to 'know' the inequalities in London prompted the development of spatially defined statistics, whereas the wide boulevards of Haussmann's Paris gave rise to the flaneur and intimate knowledge of the street. Historically towns and cities have empowered, inhibited and conditioned the production of knowledge as has long been recognised by those working across the arts, humanities and social sciences.

This conference seeks to engage with a number of questions concerning the relationship between the city and knowledge. How is knowledge in, and of, the city formed and expressed? How is this knowledge used to manage and inform urban change? What constitutes 'expert' knowledge? How is knowledge contested between and within interest groups? The conference has three main areas for enquiry:

**1. Knowledge in the City: This strand seeks to engage with the development of urban spaces and institutions for knowledge exchange. Suggestions for topics include:**

- How were cities used as places to disseminate knowledge through, for example, itinerant lecturers, print culture, scientific meetings and learned societies?;
- Libraries, reading rooms, museums, and halls as spaces that condition knowledge;
- The development of medical, scientific and technical knowledge, and professional societies, in relation to towns and cities;
- The intelligentsia and the production of knowledge.

**2. Knowledge of the City: This strand seeks to examine how urban dwellers developed understandings of their surroundings. Suggestions for topics include:**

- The extent to which conflict and crisis disrupted and changed urban dweller's knowledge of the city
- The role of the senses in shaping knowledge and behaviour in the city;
- The ways in which formal knowledge-gathering exercises such as mapping, measuring and numbering informed individual behaviour and urban change;
- The use of literary and visual sources such as photographs and travel writing in revealing understandings of the city.

**3. Knowledge and the City: This strand seeks to uncover how the nature of the urban environment shaped the knowledge produced and communicated in the city. Suggestions for topics include:**

- How did the social, economic and demographic characteristics of towns and cities influence the way people acquired and communicated knowledge?;
- Did civic leaders seek to foster knowledge as an element of civic boosterism and place marketing?
- What are the relationships between knowledge and social capital?
- Are there hierarchies of urban knowledge?

The conference committee invites proposals for **individual papers** as well as for **panel sessions** of up to 3 papers. We accept papers and sessions from any period between 1600 and 2015. Sessions that seek to draw comparisons across one or more countries, or open up new vistas for original research, are particularly encouraged.

**Abstracts** of up to 500 words, including a paper or panel title, name, affiliation and contact details should be submitted to the conference organiser and should indicate clearly how the content of the paper addresses the conference themes outlined above. Those wishing to propose sessions should provide a brief statement that identifies the ways in which the session will address the conference theme, a list of speakers, and abstracts. The final deadline for proposals for sessions and papers is **30 September 2014**.

There are three ways to submit a paper: 1. To the **Main papers forum** for experienced researchers, 2. **New researchers forum** for those at an early stage of their research project and/or PhD and 3. **First-year PhD Students**.

The conference will again, **alongside its main session for experienced researchers**, host its **new researchers' forum**. This is aimed primarily at those who, at an early stage of a **PhD or research project**, who wish primarily to discuss ideas rather than present findings. Short new researchers' papers need not be related to the main conference theme. Additionally, there will be some limited opportunities for **first-year PhD students** to present a 10 minute introduction to their topic, archival materials and the specific urban historiography. The intention is to obtain feedback from active researchers in the field of Urban History.

**Bursaries.** Students registered for a PhD can obtain a modest bursary on a first come, first served basis to offset expenses associated with conference registration and attendance. Please send an e-mail application to Professor Richard Rodger at [richard.rodger@ed.ac.uk](mailto:richard.rodger@ed.ac.uk) and also ask your PhD supervisor to confirm your status as a registered PhD student with an e-mail to the same address. **Deadline 1 December 2014.** The Urban History Group would like to acknowledge the Economic History Society for its support for these bursaries.

**For further details and to submit your abstract please contact the Urban History Group Conference Organiser:**

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