

AHA Journal Rankings for Historians of Australia

Preamble:

As increasingly universities, job applications and the Australian Research Council (ARC) require academics to justify the quality of their work, the AHA has developed a rankings system to assist in the process. *This rankings list is **only** for those historians who specialise in the history of Australia.*

We have moved away from the legacy of the journal rankings of the past (eg. A*-C), and instead use terms and indicators associated with the current ERA rating system (eg. 1-5), which should be familiar and applicable to all Australian universities.

Our approach draws on the suggestions made by Robert Cribb¹ and the methods developed by organisations such as the Australian Business Deans Council, Australian Political Science Association, and the Asian Studies Association of Australia.

The ratings do not limit the number of journals by percentiles.

Rating	Descriptor
5	<p>These journals are characterised by evidence of outstanding performance with major global significance presented by the suite of indicators used for evaluation.</p> <p>These journals publish research articles that are marked by superlative quality in terms of empirical thoroughness, analytical innovation and methodological rigour. They are widely respected within their field and have a reputation for low acceptance rates, such that acceptance for publication is considered a major achievement. These top History journals publish articles that address issues that are relevant across time and region. They are the most highly cited journals within their field, and their citations range beyond their immediate field. They draw their contributors from a wide circle of scholars and have stellar editors and editorial boards.</p>
4	<p>These journals are characterised by evidence of above quality performance of international significance presented by the suite of indicators used for evaluation.</p> <p>These journals publish research articles of strong quality in terms of empirical thoroughness, analytical innovation and methodological rigour. They command respect for the quality of their selection processes and the articles they publish are valuable and reflect strong citation records. They draw their contributors from a wide circle of scholars and the best historians publish frequently in these journals. The journals are often regarded as among the most prestigious in a particular national, thematic, methodological or sub-field of History and are read by international audiences.</p>
3	<p>These journals are characterised by evidence of quality performance of national significance presented by the suite of indicators used for evaluation.</p>

¹ Robert Cribb, "Developing a quality ranking for history journals in Australia," *History Australia* 15, no. 3 (2018): 594-599.

	<p>These journals typically publish research articles of quality in terms of empirical thoroughness, analytical innovation and methodological rigour. They are valued in their fields for adding to the empirical and analytical substance of scholarship. They often target specific demographic, niche audiences, or sub-fields and therefore are regularly cited by specialists in a particular field. A mix of established and emerging scholars publish in these journals.</p>
2	<p>These journals are characterised by evidence of performance of regional or local significance presented by the suite of indicators used for evaluation.</p> <p>These journals publish research articles that tend to be published from within a relatively small circle, have a limited distribution, and have less citation within the broader scholarly discipline. They may be of great interest to non-academic or specialist readers, reflecting research engagement, and often focus on topics of local or regional significance and interest. These journals may be important places for the publication of undergraduate and postgraduate research.</p>
1	<p>These journals do not go through a process of peer review. While their quality may be of a good standard, the lack of peer review means that they are classified as C2/C3 journal articles rather than as C1 under the annual Higher Education Research Data Collection exercise. They can be professional journals read by disciplinary specialists or end users and therefore may be more significant as markers of engagement and impact.</p>
NEW	<p>Journals in this category are not yet sufficiently well-established or publish too intermittently to meet the threshold standard for evaluation. This is not a judgement on their quality, but rather an indication that the journals need time to establish themselves before a fair ranking can be applied. Journals in this category will be ranked when the AHA next updates the rankings.</p>

- ‘Global significance’, ‘International significance’, ‘National significance’ and ‘Regional or Local significance’ refer to quality standards. They do not refer to the nature or geographical scope of particular subjects, or to the locus of research, nor its place of dissemination, although these factors may contribute to the ranking.

Suite of Indicators Guiding Rankings

- Empirical rigour of articles
- Methodological rigour of articles
- Number of issues per year
- Range and diversity of contributors
- Editorial Board esteem (diversity, seniority, prestige, affiliation)
- Citation indices and impact factors
- Reputational indicators
- Double-blind peer-review
- Acceptance rates (if known)
- Affiliation with particular associations or organisations

Explanation of Ranking Methodology

1. In September 2018 the AHA published a comprehensive list of quality journals where historians publish. From this list, we identified all journals where historians of Australia are known to publish. This includes both those journals based in Australia, as well as international journals.
2. We mapped each selected journal against known rankings lists: Scimago 2017, ERA 2010 and the European Research Index for the Humanities 2011. We also mapped journals' H-indices where available. When the journal was listed in multiple fields of research, we used only the ranking measure in the field of Historical Studies.
3. Working off the map and applying the suite of indicators above, we determined what rank a journal should receive. *In cases where a journal crosses disciplines, the ranking we provide is indicative of its quality in the field of research 2103 Historical Studies. This ranking does not speak to the journal's quality or impact in other fields of research.*
4. This rankings list has been sent out for consultation from the AHA Executive and the wider AHA membership. It is current for the year 2020 and will be reviewed and updated biennially.

For Historians Specialising in Regions Other than Australia

The Australian Historical Association is the peak body representing all historians in Australia and its membership is not limited only to historians who specialise in Australian history. As such, the organisation canvassed options for how to approach journal rankings for other regions of the world. This includes journals published in languages other than English, which are often just as high quality and may be the top journals for particular regions or sub-fields of history. The AHA embarked on a consultation process with representative associations; given the breadth of journals, approaches taken to measure quality, and the diversity even within these regional specialisations, the regional representatives have responded in different ways:

- Africa: African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific
Efforts to rank journals by essentially quantitative indicators such as 'impact factor' or citation number, if qualified by estimated prestige, for example in Scimago, play an increasing role for some measurers. These tools can be open to criticism of overly quantitative statistical manipulation by interested parties, and can deleteriously influence prestige of journals in specialised fields, by language, or even discipline. History can be situated in either Humanities or Social Sciences, and does not easily fit such schemes.

Although measures of journal rating advanced by certain publishers or other organisation can vary, the rough consensus among historians of Africa, whether in Australia or globally, would tend to support the following ranking, taking into account influence on tenure/promotion. This can vary depending on country/regional or thematic focus of research, which can also change during academic careers

1. *Journal of African History*
2. *International Journal of African Historical Studies*
3. *Journal of Southern African Studies*
4. *Africa*

5. *African Affairs*
6. *South African Historical Journal*
7. *Journal of Religion in Africa*
8. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*

A more comprehensive response from the African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific is available as Appendix 1.

- **Americas: the Australia and New Zealand American Studies Association**
ANZASA has indicated that because there are so many sub-fields of American history journals, it would not be appropriate to provide even a partial list of journals to rank.

- **Ancient History: Australasian Society for Classical Studies**
ASCS has indicated that because there are so many disciplines, sub-disciplines and cultures involved in Classical Studies, it is hard to conceive of a partial or indicative list of ranked journal. A comprehensive list would inevitably start from the 2010 ERA list, to which ASCS contributed but which was never endorsed in its entirety.

- **Asia: Asian Studies Association of Australia**
The Asian Studies Association of Australia is developing its own journal rankings, so Asian historians are advised to refer to that list.

- **Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Australian and New Zealand Association for Medieval and Early Modern Studies**
ANZAMEMS represents scholars working in myriad disciplines, locations and periods. There are significant journals in all of these fields, but none that represent the scholarly interests of all of our membership. As such, we are loathe to offer journal rankings and appraisals, as it would not be possible to account for the variety of scholarship, as well as the happily diverse ideas of quality and prestige, contained within the ranks of ANZAMEMS.

- **Modern Europe: Australasian Association for European History**
Scimago remains broadly indicative of journal rankings in Modern European history, with some caveats, including:
 - 1) *Non-history journals with high scoring 'history' metrics dominate the upper segment of quartile Q1, pushing many good journals into quartile Q2, and distorting 'top 10%' figures for the discipline.*
 - 2) *Area studies history journals are uniformly ranked lower than generalist journals, despite their field-leading research in their area.*

For further clarification, please see the attached AAEH response in Appendix 2.

Draft only

- New Zealand: New Zealand Historical Association
The New Zealand Historical Association did not respond to invitations to produce a joint Australia/New Zealand list. As such, New Zealand journals have not been included in the Australia list.

APPENDIX 1: African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific Response to AHA Invitation to Comment on the Journal Rankings List.

AHA Journal Rankings for Historians of Australia: AFRICAN HISTORY

History and Context

Academic African history took off in the 1960s, marked by the launch of *Journal of African History* (Cambridge, 1960-) which to many historians remains most highly-regarded and, in 1972, *International Journal of African Historical Studies* (Boston). As in other area studies, African history subdivided into a range of sub-fields including social, cultural, economic, gender, some of which have their own journals including the highly-regarded *Journal of Religion in Africa* (Brill, 1967), more recently *Islamic Africa* (Brill, 2010), both dominated by historians, and *African Economic History* (Wisconsin, 1976-). Many historians focus on a particular country or region, and favour such titles as the *Journal of Southern African Studies* (T&F (initially OUP), 1974-), *Journal of Eastern African Studies* (T&F, 2007-) and *Journal of West African History* (MSU, 2015-). The former is longest and best established and if multi-disciplinary, has a particularly strong representation of historians. The bulk of highly ranked journals are in the North, but a few in South Africa, notably the *South African Historical Journal* (South African Historical Society, 1969-; T&F, 2008-) have high standing.

Historians of Africa based in Australia also publish in broadly pitched journals, in anthropology-oriented titles such as the high-ranked *Africa* (OUP), in politics, notably *African Affairs* (OUP, also with high impact) or in area studies multi-disciplinary journals such as *Australasian Review of African Studies* (AFSAAP, 1978-) and *African Studies Review* (Cambridge). Some political science journals, notably *Journal of Modern African Studies* (Cambridge) cover contemporary, occasionally older history. Historians working in areas such as culture, literature, medicine and archaeology also publish in specialist journals. However most historians continue to focus on history, politics and anthropology which tend to be the mainstay of African studies associations in our region and globally. In addition, historians specialising in particular eras have their own journals, such as *Slavery & Abolition*. There are also historiography journals, notably *History in Africa* (Cambridge), focusing on methods and sources. In various African universities, archaeology is twinned with history departments and Australia has boasted several major archaeologists of Africa, but following Australian custom, archaeology is not included here. Of particular significance to some historians of Africa are journals in related fields of diplomatic history, including *Journal of Imperial & Commonwealth History* (here the *Australian Journal of Politics and History* may also be mentioned) among those in which Australian Africanists tend to publish. A measure of the standing of African history is the growing number of articles in general journals such as *Past and Present*, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, *History Workshop Journal*, *Historical Journal*, *Labor History*, *Journal of Global History* etc., though these need not be ranked here. Given Australia's own particular history and culture, and a general lack here of teaching African languages, there has for decades been a tendency for historians to favour Anglophone countries, notably in Southern, Eastern and to a lesser extent, West Africa. There have been few historians of Francophone or North Africa here. This is changing, if slowly, with growth of African Australian communities, but as of yet this is little reflected in academic positions or postgraduate research. *Cahiers d'études africaines* (EHESS, 1960-) is the best in French, and also publishes some articles in English. There are solid journals in German, Italian and Portuguese but Australian historians have not published there.

Commercial ranking devices

Efforts to rank journals by essentially quantitative indicators such as ‘impact factor’ or citation number, if qualified by estimated prestige, for example in Scimago, play an increasing role for some measurers. These tools can be open to criticism of overly quantitative statistical manipulation by interested parties, and can deleteriously influence prestige of journals in specialised fields, by language, or even discipline. History can be situated in *either* Humanities or Social Sciences, and does not easily fit such schemes. Some African journals (and books) where eminent historians publish remain ‘invisible’ or much-delayed in commercial trawlers/indexers (for South Africa, elevation by Scimago of theological/archaeological above history journals (with History journals not even included!) is a case in point; neither does it scope country co-publication). Distortions also are apparent for Area Studies history journals, automatically ranked below generalist titles. Some publishers linked to such tools have received scholarly criticism over prices and ethics. Blunt algorithm-based tools will continue to be seen as important by administrators and historians will need to engage with their findings for career prospects, but junior scholars in particular should continue to critically evaluate publishers and not be overawed by reputation or numeric ranking.

Ranking

I include two rankings: one that seeks to equate ‘Pan-African’ with regional and thematic journals; the other an estimation of overall ranking in terms of prestige, tenure, rigour, and reputation. Both start with the highest or equal highest ranked as Number 1.

A. Ranking equating different fields of research

1a. Top ranked broad African history journals.

1. *Journal of African History*: tends to be at the top of the tree
2. *International Journal of African Historical Studies* (African Studies Center, Boston U., 1972-)

1b. Top ranked inter-disciplinary and other discipline journals.

1. *Africa*
2. *African Affairs*
3. *Journal of Religion in Africa*

The first two journals, which are highly regarded by many scholars, both tend to claim pre-eminence; the former in anthropology, the latter in political science/contemporary history.

1c. Top ranked regional or country journals in African history.

1. *Journal of Southern African Studies*
2. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*
3. *South African Historical Journal*

2a. African Studies journals.

1. *African Studies Review*
2. *Canadian Journal of African Studies*

2b. Australian-based journals

1. *Australasian Review of African Studies*
2. *Australian Journal of Politics and History*

B. Overall Rankings.

Although measures of journal rating advanced by certain publishers or other organisation can vary, the rough consensus among historians of Africa, whether in Australia or globally, would tend to support the following ranking, taking into account influence on tenure/promotion. This can vary depending on country/regional or thematic focus of research, which can also change during academic careers

1. *Journal of African History*
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APPENDIX 2: Australasian Association for European History Response to AHA Invitation to Comment on the Journal Rankings List.

Opinion within the AAEH was more or less evenly divided on the question of offering journals to be added to an indicative list.

On the one hand, it was recognised that an indicative list was far more welcome than an attempt to offer an all-encompassing, graduated list. On the other, there were concerns that a) far better, more exhaustive and more indicative external lists based on solid metrics already exist (such as Scimago) and b) by virtue of its omissions and inclusions any indicative list might prove counterproductive and restrictive rather than useful.

That said, Europeanists would recognise 3 types of journal in which they would publish (with RANDOMLY CHOSEN, but English language examples given here in parentheses):

- 1) Aggregate journals combining various fields of study (*Past and Present*, *American Historical Review*, *Journal of Modern History*, the *Historical Journal*, *English Historical Review*, *Rethinking History*)
- 2) Area studies journals (*Slavic Review*, *Central European History*, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*)
- 3) Thematic journals (*Victorian Studies*, *Gender and History*, *Labour History*, *Itinerario*, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*)

The AAEH feels that all 3 of these types of journal have an important place, and that each addresses an audience of great value. Ranking these against one another, either across categories or within them makes little sense. While in absolute numbers, more people might access *Past and Present*, all Germanists would use *German History*, all French specialists would use *French History*, all historians of gender would use *Gender and History*. Accordingly, historians do, and should, write in those journals that address their natural audience and speak to those audiences who deal most directly with their research concerns. Apart from the bald metrics of Scimago, how would one make an informed decision about the relative status of, for example *German History* and *French History*?

The AAEH understands the desire of the AHA to offer a 'local content' incentive or more generous rankings for Australian journals, as a way of supporting research (often paid for by Australian taxpayers) that addresses specifically Australian concerns and Australian audiences. For important local disciplinary reasons, such a list will probably overlook the robust, globally-generated metrics that govern other sub-fields and inflate the 'status' of local journals vis-à-vis international ones. The AAEH would in no way support an attempt to compare the AHA's Australian list with Scimago rankings, or with any *ad hoc*, 'indicative', non-Australian list generated by the current process. Any language that can be used to emphasise that the Australian list is aimed at offering supplementary information, taking into account local imperatives, would be appreciated. Ensuring that the local and international lists are not conflated or compared would also be welcomed.