

[Request for Abstracts: Data and Disease in Historical Perspective](#)

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Call for Papers

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United Kingdom

Subject Fields:

Health and Health Care, History of Science, Medicine, and Technology, Intellectual History, Psychology, Demographic History / Studies

[Data and Disease in Historical Perspective: Request for Abstracts](#)

[Request for Abstracts for a Two-Part Workshop Hosted by the University of Edinburgh](#)

Both public and professional understandings of COVID-19 have been cultured by the epidemiological data which has been made, and made available, over the course of the pandemic. The inconsistent nature of this data, across and between nations, has been a notable barrier in the elucidation of the pandemic's global spread. As our recent experience suggests, the collection, cleaning, analysis and presentation of epidemiological data is an essential element of contemporary biomedicine. Correlating medical data with an almost infinite number of supplementary and often contestable data points—from vocation to location, religion to gender, age to race—facilitates causal inferences and is the basic characteristic of epidemiology. In recent years, however, medical anthropologists and STS scholars have been increasingly critical of quantification and the use of reductive data within medicine. Yet initial studies of the historical relationship between data, modern data practices, and knowledge about disease has raised many open questions. As such, this workshop will provide much-needed historical perspective on how disease and data have coevolved, how the concept of epidemiological data emerged and how these data have been used, and sometimes misused, in pursuit of epidemiological reasoning.

In order to explore these histories, we invite abstract submissions for a June 2023 virtual workshop led by Dr. John Nott (University of Edinburgh) and organised as part of the ERC-funded project '[The Epidemiological Revolution](#)' (PI: Dr Lukas Engelmann). This will be the first part of a two-part workshop, online in June 2023 and in person, in Edinburgh, in December 2023. The first meeting will involve short presentations from each participant, with plenty of time for discussion. The second meeting will be used to workshop pre-circulated article-length drafts based on the papers which were delivered in June, with the intention to submit them together as part of a special issue by February 2024. This publication is intended to complement the 2017/8 special issues (in *Osiris* and *Historical*

Studies in the Natural Sciences) which dealt with the history of data and databases in the history of science more generally. The precise outlet for this collection will be dependent on the submissions to this call and will be discussed as part of the first workshop. Transport to and accommodation in Edinburgh will be provided for all attendees of the second workshop.

Although the focus of this workshop is historical, we intend for this to be interdisciplinary, wide-ranging discussion, and encourage submissions that focus on:

- The collection, cleaning, storage, analysis, computation, distribution, and visual and textual representation of epidemiological data.
- Forms and typologies of epidemiological data, including outbreak reportage and narrative field reports; standardised international mortality registers (e.g. Institut Pasteur, League of Nations' Health Bureau, PAHO); cross-sectional health surveys; hospital data and institutional records; disease mapping and geographical reconnaissance.
- The material culture which has facilitated data collection and analysis; the reports, forms, surveys, surveying equipment, and computational devices which have been used to collect and analyse data, and to corral and standardise disease.
- The other data points which have been collected and correlated alongside disease data; demographic or anthropometric indices, or data on climate, housing, or human-animal relations, amongst many others.
- The historical drivers of data practice within contemporary epidemiology and possible alternatives to such practice.

There is some flexibility in terms of periodisation, but submissions should focus primarily on the mid-nineteenth century onwards and we are especially encouraging of work which details these histories outside of Europe and North America.

Submission Instructions

Established, early career and emerging scholars, including PhD students and post-docs, are all welcomed to submit. Contributions from scholars in the Global South are particularly welcomed. Support for translation or copy-editing can also be provided. Interested contributors should submit abstracts (250-300 words) and a short biography for review by **February 28th, 2023**, via e-mail to john.nott@ed.ac.uk. Authors of accepted abstracts will be notified in **March 2023**, and the first virtual workshop will be held across two half-days, **June 1st and 2nd 2023**. Following the first virtual workshop, authors selected to participate in the special issue will have the opportunity to participate in a second in-person meeting to workshop full manuscripts of around 10,000 words

(including abstract, tables, and references) in **December 2023**. We expect to have the final manuscripts ready for peer review by **February 2024**. A note about accessibility: We are committed to accessibility. More information about access related to the workshops will be sent out closer to the date of the first workshop. If you have any questions or concerns about access, please email us.

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URL:

<https://www.epidemy.sps.ed.ac.uk/request-for-abstracts-data-and-disease-in-historical-perspective/>