



The Elizabeth Simpson Award

For the journal illustrating the best contribution to family history

Judging criteria

The award is given to the society who, in the judges' opinion, submits a well-presented journal with the best content, both in quality and range of articles and for the quality and diversity of news items and information appropriate to that society's aims and objectives.

When considering entries, the judges will consider each journal's contribution in three key areas:

Presentation

A good layout and an attractive presentation of any journal will not only enhance its contents, but may also encourage members and others to read it. Good design may also contribute to the reader's overall perception about that society.

The wide-spread availability of personal computers with word processing and desktop publishing packages makes it possible for most societies, irrespective of size, to produce an attractively laid out journal. For this reason, emphasis will be put into this aspect; however, allowance will be made for any societies that do not have access to newer technology.

The panel will be looking for an attractive, consistent and clear presentation that allows the information to be easily accessed and read.

- The journal cover should, through an appropriate combination of its title, use of the society's name, inclusion of a map or description of the area of interest, clearly convey to readers whether the society covers an area or aspect of family history they are interested in
- The date and number of the issue should be prominently displayed and an indication of frequency of publication and approximate issue dates can helpfully be included.
- Fonts should be limited to one or two only; multiple fonts on the same page can be distracting to the reader
- Headings need to stand out clearly, as do surnames in the text
- Running headers or footers on each page with the name of the society or journal, the issue number and date, ensure that if photocopies of items are taken the source is automatically included
- Illustrations, photographs, line drawings or clipart can liven up a page of text and make it more interesting as well as informative. Remember the old saying – 'A picture is worth a thousand words'.

Articles

The panel will expect articles, as appropriate to the needs of that society, to make up a large part of a journal, although the actual percentage will reflect the amount of space devoted to other contents. They may include:

- a mixture of contributions of varying lengths
- some specific topics; for example: occupations, the poor, migration, etc
- religions etc. from a range of historic periods
- a balance of interests for new and experienced researchers
- aspects of record keeping, including use of computers
- examples of good practice or methodology in using a range of sources
- pertinent examples of the use of national and local sources
- suitable items of local or national history
- sources or recommendations for further reading.

Information

In many societies only a minority of members live in the local area and can attend meetings, therefore the journal may be the main or only point of reference with the society, or possibly the world of family history in general, for the majority of its members. The inclusion of a wide range of information relative to that society's needs is, therefore, an important factor. According to each society's policy this may include

- Society news and information – these could include regular or occasional reports from officers
- Projects – details of progress on projects helps to make volunteers feel appreciated and may stimulate others to take part
- Services offered – details of what services or indexes are available to members and non-members with information about how to access them; they may include reciprocal research and courier service.
- Membership details – who to contact about joining, the price of subscription and the membership year.
- Notices of meetings – lists of talks and speakers for each branch, with details about times and locations. These need to be forecast to at least the next publication date and preferably longer to assist out-of-area members planning a trip. If a society has more than one branch, then the name and address of each branch contact should be given.
- Publications – lists of publications for sale can either be included in full in each journal or in an annual list with regular updates listed in the Journal. Costs of publications with UK and overseas postal charges should be stated.

- Book reviews – reviews, rather than reprints of publishers’ notices, should include not only the FFHS and other related organisations, but also other items of appropriate local and general interest. Where the society does not sell a publication, details of availability should be given.
- Society officers – the names of the society’s officers should be included with, where the society policy allows, postal and email addresses and/or phone numbers of either all officers or the preferred principal contacts, preferably in one place – at the beginning or end of the publication
- Meeting reports – inclusion of these again depends on a society’s policy. If a speaker agrees to the text or a detailed summary of their talk being included as an article, this fact should be clearly indicated.
- Notes for contributors – details of where contributors should send material and in what format, together with any copy dates.
- Help wanted – these often benefit from careful editing in order to focus on the key information or advice sought.
- Members’ interests – these may be provided in each issue or collated and issued annually or at an agreed frequency.
- General news – news about other family or local history societies’ forthcoming events, such as conferences, seminars and open days, as well as items of general interest from the Federation of Family History Societies, Society of Genealogists, Public Record Office, etc.
- Local record office news – some societies are fortunate in enlisting the help of local archivists or librarians to provide latest news in that record office or library. Even where this is not the case, the inclusion of available news items will prove helpful to local and out-of-area members alike.

Other aspects such as occasional or regular reports on:

- Society reference library acquisitions with details of the arrangements for accessing items of interest
- Activities and programme of specialist interest groups.