

Call for Papers: Special Issue of *The Journal of Epistolary Studies* on “Letters as Paratexts in the Early Modern World”

Guest Editors: Hannah Sparwasser Soroka (PhD ABD, McGill University) and Dr. Barry Torch (independent scholar)

Description: This special edition of *The Journal of Epistolary Studies* takes up the use of letters as supplements and enhancements to the early modern book writ large, and how epistolary, book, and material culture can and did work together in the early modern world. In particular, this edition seeks to consider the socio-cultural functions and meanings of epistolary material embedded in print and manuscript culture. The editors are interested in thoughtful engagement with historical material, close readings of texts and paratexts, the circulation, networks, and behavior of using epistolary material, and critical reconsiderations and complications of these categories.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- Dedicatory epistles and epistles to the reader
- Appended letters
- Epistolary material in frontispieces and other illustrations
- Letters, their circulation as books of letters, and informal publications (commonplace books, scribal publications, circulation of books, etc.)
- Personal dedications in books
- Graphic, textual, and layout choices in epistolary texts and/or their paratexts
- The gendered, racialized, and otherwise embodied realities of publication and epistolary culture in early modernity
- The economics of early modern epistolarity and print
- Critiques of epistolary and paratextual scholarship conventions

The special edition editors construe early modernity broadly, and welcome submissions concerning the period 1350-1800. They also look forward to submissions with global perspectives and investigations.

Submission guidelines: Please submit a 500-word abstract and a 200 word biography to drbarrytorch@gmail.com and hannah.sparwassersoroka@mail.mcgill.ca with subject line “Journal of Epistolary Studies Submission” by 15 June 2026.

Deadline: Abstracts due 15 June 2026.

Deadline to submit full articles: 1 November 2026

Projected appearance of special journal edition: Fall 2027