



West Virginia Humanities Council

History Alive! Virtual Performance Policies and Guidelines

History Alive! is intended, first and foremost, as an in-person live experience. The presenters work hard not only to learn the facts and backgrounds of their historical characters, but also to present a realistic simulation of the characters' physical presence. It is the Council's position that audiences gain a more educational and entertaining experience when able to interact with the presenter in physical space.

However, circumstances sometimes dictate that in-person performances cannot take place, such as in the case of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. Even under these circumstances, *History Alive!* is a powerful, nonconventional tool for educating students and other audiences, and the Council fully supports making *History Alive!* performances possible by virtual means.

[Booking a virtual *History Alive!* performance follows many of the same steps as an in-person performance:](#)

1. **Contact the presenter directly to determine their availability for your performance.** Their contact information can be found on the Council website.
2. **Send \$150 payment and a completed booking form to the Council.** The booking form can also be found on the Council website on the *History Alive!* page.
3. **On the booking form, there is a line to indicate if your performance is virtual.** Please also indicate on the line below which platform you intend to use (Zoom, Webex, GoTo Meeting, etc.). This is the only booking step that is different from a normal *History Alive!*
4. **When your booking for a virtual performance is accepted, you will receive a confirmation email from the Council.**

A virtual *History Alive!* presentation still consists of three parts:

- monologue (15-25 minutes)
- discussion between the audience and the character (10-15 minutes)
- discussion between the audience and the presenter (5-10 minutes)

[Please review the next page for guidelines and recommendations.](#)

The following guidelines should be observed when booking a virtual presentation:

1. ***Your organization is responsible for providing the virtual space.***
Just as you would have furnished a physical venue for a traditional presentation, your organization needs to plan out the “space” in which the presenter will interact with your audience.
2. ***When discussing the presentation with your desired presenter, be clear from the outset that your event is intended to be virtual.*** Presenters work as independent contractors through the *History Alive!* program, and not all will be equally inclined toward virtual presentations.
3. ***Provide clear, concise (preferably written) instructions to the presenter on how to login and “join” the virtual event.*** Also, connecting with the presenter and logging them in 15-20 minutes before the event is scheduled to begin is advised to prevent any delays.
4. ***Establish a clear procedure for the audience to ask questions.*** The moderator for your event should announce at the beginning how you plan to convey questions to the presenter during the “discussion” portions of the presentation. To avoid a confusing barrage (probably made worse by the varying quality of your guests’ internet connections!), it may be best for attendees to direct their questions through the moderator, or at least request permission from the moderator to speak before doing so.
5. ***Publicly posting video of the performance is not allowed.*** If you host through a platform that does so automatically, such as Facebook Live, you must remove the video from public view after one week. This one-week grace period should allow enough time for your social media page to reap the benefits of Likes and Shares, after which removing it will help preserve the benefits of future *History Alive!* presentations for other organizations—and your own!
6. ***Promote!*** Just like a physical event, promotion for virtual events needs to be posted and reposted to gain an audience. Traditional press, like local newspapers, works well for virtual events, too. Using the sample press releases included in your confirmation emails is a great way to inform some of your best potential audience members.

Still have questions? We may have answered them on the next page!

Further questions can be directed to Program Officer Kyle Warmack
at 304.346.8500 or warmack@wvhumanities.org

Frequently asked questions:

Why does my organization have to provide the virtual meeting platform?

- Different organizations and audiences have different means and needs. Zoom or GoTo Meeting may work for some, but not for others. Your staff/volunteers may have experience in one platform, but not another. If you have no prior experience with virtual meeting spaces, the Council Program Officer is happy to consult on the best fit for your organization.
- You are your own best technical support. Since Council staff cannot be familiar with every virtual platform available, it is best that your organization select its own best fit, in case there are technical difficulties during the event.

Why do virtual presentations still cost \$150?

The booking fee for all *History Alive!* presentations covers the performer's commitment in time, makeup, and other supplies. It takes just as much time and effort for a performer to prepare for a virtual presentation as any traditional in-person event. 100% of each booking fee goes to the performer.

My organization doesn't have a subscription to any video conferencing software. What should we do?

- There are a variety of options available at little to no cost, and many online sources comparing the advantages of each platform. If none of these suits your organization's needs, a Facebook Live or YouTube Live may be the best way to proceed.
- Facebook Live and YouTube Live are free but present other challenges, since they require additional software to "patch" your presenter's video into *your* live video. If your organization doesn't have someone well-versed in this, a "hybrid" approach can work well:
- The "hybrid" approach meshes in-person elements with a virtual performance. This involves the performer traveling to your venue and being physically present with your moderator. Your moderator will introduce the performer on a computer or other webcam-equipped device operated by your organization, and then the presentation will be given through that same device. This has some advantages over a purely virtual performance.
 - It takes one more internet connection out of the equation—the performer will be presenting through your own venue's internet service, minimizing the risk of a technical issue.
 - It allows you to "brand" your broadcast by framing your museum, event space, or other venue in the background.
 - Depending on the available space, it may give the performer more room in which to perform.

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