

## History Magazines

Freelancers with a nose for research and a talent for storytelling can find a rich future in the past. “The history market began taking off in the 1960s with the centennial of the Civil War, and it’s been going gangbusters ever since,” said editor Rod Paschall of *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History*. The history market is a colorful mosaic of niches encompassing a wide variety of specialty areas. You can choose from a topic as focused as lighthouses (*Lighthouse Digest*) or as broad as Americana (*American Heritage*).

- ❖ You even can pick the war of your choice (*World War II* and *America’s Civil War*).
- ❖ You needn’t be an expert or historian to crack these markets. Even at *Air & Space/Smithsonian* magazine, where one in three articles is based on history, editor George C. Larson leans heavily toward writers who have experience in consumer magazines. That’s because today’s history magazines have shifted away from so-called “footnoters” and “rivet counters” and are seeking good old-fashioned stories about the experiences of real people.
- ❖ Editors want different takes on old stories and material that both entertains and informs while providing readers with new insights into a moment in history. Getting off the beaten path can also snag a sale, such as an *MHQ* piece on Greek warriors who dressed in drag to gain access to a fortification, or an *Air & Space/Smithsonian* story on a nineteenth-century hoax about the supposed discovery of people on the moon.
- ❖ History writers do need to be sticklers for detail. Editors look for solid facts that go to the source.

- ❖ “Don’t use books for your research,” warned *Lighthouse Digest* editor Tim Harrison. “There are too many books out there with inaccuracies. We would prefer to see writers do some in-depth research.” That means checking with historical societies, mining old newspapers and documents, and perhaps talking with old-timers who actually lived the history you’re writing about.
- ❖ Sometimes those old-timers aren’t so old—what’s classified as history varies with each publication. While *World War II* magazine limits its content to the years encompassing that war, *Air & Space/Smithsonian* considers space history to be as recent as ten years ago.
- ❖ Most editors demand documentation of sources, as well as reference notes. Paschall sounds a common note among history editors: “We want to know who is quoting and where he’s getting his material, because we just cannot afford to have bogus information in our magazine.” Failure to include those reference notes in your submission is a common cause of rejection. In many cases, you don’t need to provide illustrations. But it helps if you can at least offer leads on sources of old photos or perhaps suggest suitable illustrations for your article. Most history publications are wide open to new contributors and hungry for material.

## Health Magazines

Squeezed between pressures of daily living and ballooning medical costs, readers turn to health magazines for vital information. “More and more people are really questing for that place in themselves where they feel well in every sense of the word,” said Doug Crichton, editor in chief of *Health*. “Consumers of health services are sick and tired of bad treatment, insurance hassles, the entire health bureaucracy,” added Peter Moore, executive editor of *Men’s Health*. “They want to take health into their own hands. The boom in health writing and reporting is an outgrowth of that.”

**Health magazines are extremely niche-oriented, so freelancers must be savvy to each publication's distinctive slant when pitching article ideas.**

For example, *Health* “is very much about a healthy lifestyle,” whereas *Let's Live* is “all about nutrition,” and *Men's Health* is definitely a guy thing. Also, a growing number of publications are devoted to a single health issue. *MAMM* focuses on cancer of the breast and female reproductive organs, while *Diabetes Health* obviously hones in on diabetes. “I think there's a need for information, communication, and community for people who have been diagnosed with life-threatening conditions,” said *MAMM* editor in chief Gwen Darien. Editors look for well-researched, leading-edge health information supported with quotes from medical experts. Many also want the health issue in question to be illustrated with quotes and anecdotes from everyday people.

“If you're ready to make the fifty phone calls it takes to provide readers with information that's actionable and that they haven't read a hundred times before,” said Moore, “we can use you.”

In most cases, you need not be a health-care professional to tap into the health market, and the door is wide open to freelancers. Writers who can interpret scientific studies and make them understandable to laymen “would be worth their weight in gold” to *Let's Live* editor in chief Beth Salmon. A number of health magazines have Web sites open to freelancers. *Health* magazine's ([www.health.com](http://www.health.com)) “is much broader, much deeper, and allows

us to do things that the magazine cannot. Along with standalone articles, the Web site offers in-depth research and guidelines on specific health issues to complement related articles in the magazine.

As for the future of the health-writing market -There will always be magazines that are very focused on health, health news, and health-and-medicine.