

MICHAEL J. HALVORSON

Professor of History | Pacific Lutheran University

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PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

Michael J. Halvorson is a historian of technology, media, institutions, and historical memory whose work explores how human beings learn, preserve, and interpret technological systems across time. His scholarship and public writing connect computing history, oral history, innovation studies, media culture, religion, and public knowledge systems. Halvorson's work bridges academic history, public humanities, and the lived culture of technological change.

ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS

Pacific Lutheran University — Tacoma, Washington

Professor of History, 2003–present

Benson Family Chair in Business and Economic History, 2016–2026

Co-Founder, Innovation Studies Program, 2017

Director, Innovation Studies Program, 2017–2024

University of Washington — Seattle, Washington

Instructor and Visiting Assistant Professor in History and European Studies, 1999–2002

Microsoft Corporation — Redmond, Washington

Editor, Technical Writer, Program Manager, and Product Unit Manager, 1985–1993

SELECTED BOOKS

This Little World: A How-To Guide for Social Innovators. Routledge, 2024. Co-authored with Shelly Cano Kurtz.

Code Nation: Personal Computing and the Learn to Program Movement in America. ACM Books, 2020.

The Renaissance: All That Matters. McGraw-Hill, 2014.

Heinrich Heshusius and Confessional Polemic in Early Lutheran Orthodoxy. Ashgate/Routledge, 2010.

Defining Community in Early Modern Europe. Ashgate/Routledge, 2008. Co-edited with Karen E. Spierling.

Author or co-author of more than forty books related to computing, programming, and technology culture between 1986 and 2013, including *Learn BASIC Now* (1989), an award-winning Microsoft Press introduction to programming that reflected the growing “learn to code” movement of the personal computing era.

SELECTED ARTICLES AND CHAPTERS

- “The Help Desk: Changing Images of Product Support in Personal Computing, 1975–1990.” In *Abstractions and Embodiments: New Histories of Computing and Society*, edited by Janet Abbate and Stephanie Dick. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2022.
- “German Lutheran Centennial Dramas,” *Lutheran Quarterly*, 2016.
- “Ritual and the Early Reformation in Braunschweig,” *Archive for Reformation History*, 2011.
- “Jews and Jesuits in a Confessional Age,” *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 2008.

ORAL HISTORY AND PUBLIC HUMANITIES

Senior Oral Historian, Microsoft Alumni Voices, 2024. Organized oral-history interviews documenting the experiences of former Microsoft employees for the firm’s 50th-anniversary commemoration.

TEACHING AND INTERDISCIPLINARY WORK

Courses taught include the history of technology and innovation, video games and historical storytelling, Tudor and early modern England, medieval Europe, Renaissance and Reformation Europe, historical methods, and interdisciplinary seminars on media, society, and culture.

Halvorson has also led study-abroad programs in the United Kingdom and France, including semester programs in Oxford focused on history, culture, and institutions.

SELECTED INVITED LECTURES

- “Einstein’s Blackboard: Struggles with Communication in the History of Innovation.” 18th Dale E. Benson Lecture, Pacific Lutheran University, 2025.
- “Lutheran Theology in an Age of High Technology.” Keynote address, Lutheran Bishops Conference, Newport, Oregon, 2019.
- “Can Learning to Code Be Described as a Social Movement in American History?” Homecoming Keynote, Pacific Lutheran University, 2020.
- “Planning for the Future: Innovation and Social Media Technology.” Concordia Publishing Directors Retreat, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 2012.

SELECTED LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

- Department Chair, History Department, Pacific Lutheran University
- Co-Founder and Director, Innovation Studies Program
- Benson Family Chair in Business and Economic History
- Board Member and Board President, Compass Housing Alliance
- Editorial Advisory Board, *Lutheran Quarterly Journal*
- Senior Oral Historian, Microsoft Alumni Voices

EDUCATION

- Ph.D., History, University of Washington, 2001
- M.A., History, University of Washington, 1996
- B.A., Computer Science, Pacific Lutheran University, 1985