

AASLH Annual Meeting Call for Session Proposals

Proposals Due: December 8, 2017

Location: Kansas City, MO

Meeting Dates: September 26-29, 2018

Dear Colleagues:

The American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) will present its 2017 annual meeting in Kansas City, MO, from September 26-29.

The Theme: Truth or Consequences

Museums and history sites have been ranked among America's most trusted institutions in an age where trust continues to erode and truth sometimes becomes murky. Our history organizations maintain the trust if we continue to tell the truth. But what is truth when our work is based on interpretation of the historical evidence and interpretations change? How do people know what to believe?

We in the history field know that truth is based on an underlying complexity and on multiple perspectives and sources. It is our responsibility to help our audiences to see that complexity and to understand how we reach our conclusions based on solid historical research. It is also our responsibility to provide a forum where people can come together to explore the complexity of the past. We demonstrate our relevance to society when we dig into historical evidence, question its validity and provide much-needed historical context in relation to contemporary issues that impact the world around us.

Are there consequences to avoiding the complexity of the past? What do they look like? How is society impacted when we fail to show multiple perspectives and the gray areas of history? What are specific challenges to showing complexity? Are there costs? It is often risky to tell stories people don't want to hear. Could we do a better job at explaining how we do research and teaching how to be critical thinkers? What does that look like?

Our host city, Kansas City, offers a rich complexity that permeates its past. From native Missouri, Oto, Kansa and Osage lands, the region became a crossroads of French traders and settlers traveling west on the Oregon, California and Santa Fe trails. The Kansas-Missouri border became the first battlefield of the Civil War, and in many respects the border war continues today. The swirling parade of historical figures includes Latter-day Saints, explorers Lewis and Clark, President Harry Truman, the Kansas City Monarchs Negro Leagues baseball team and stars Satchel Paige and Jackie Robinson, and Amelia Earhart from nearby Atchison, Kansas. Its central location led to it becoming the second busiest railroad center in the country, and soon its booming stockyards led to famous Kansas City steak. Kansas City became the center of jazz music. It had no equal, mainly due to the willingness during prohibition of the political boss Tom Pendergast to allow alcohol to flow.

And after World War I, Kansas City quickly raised more than \$2.5 million in just ten days to build a memorial to honor the Great War. As President Calvin Coolidge noted upon its dedication in 1926, "[The Liberty Memorial] has not been raised to commemorate war and victory, but rather the results of war and victory which are embodied in peace and liberty.... Today I return in order that I may place the official sanction of the national government upon one of the most elaborate and impressive memorials that adorn our country."

The city has also struggled with racial segregation, and today remains as one of the more segregated U.S. cities. Nationally known developer J.C. Nichols introduced and perfected racial housing restrictions in the 1910s. As Kansas City continued to grow and new suburban housing flourished in neighboring Kansas, federal housing policies cemented the racial segregation. The Johnson County (KS) Museum unravels how that history has impacted the metropolitan region while acknowledging the experiences of its largely white homogenous population.

Today, the city's heritage unfolds in a wide variety of museums, performing arts, and entertainment venues, a great bar and food scene – and some of the best BBQ in the country. Its creative spirit is captured in its economic and business development. Businesses such as Garmin, Hallmark, H & R Block, and Sprint find their roots there, and spur new businesses and entrepreneurial ventures.

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Truth or Consequences is a thread woven through the stories told in many of its cultural institutions – stories found in the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, Truman Presidential Library, and American Jazz Museum. The National World War I Museum and Memorial plays a proud role in the global centennial commemoration of World War I where Truth or Consequences continues to be examined as the war's enduring impact continues.

As we face the challenges of teaching truth and revealing complexity and many perspectives, Kansas City serves as a perfect place to gather and learn from each other.

In the spirit of this theme, the Program Committee seeks proposals that:

- Incorporate elements of practicality and scalability.
- Focus on projects that exemplify creativity and an experimental spirit.
- Promote the relevance of history: understanding the past and applying lessons to the present.
- Demonstrate ways to present the historical process (how historians evaluate sources and arrive at their conclusions) to the public
- Identify ways to strengthen organizational sustainability and transparency including successes, challenges, and lessons learned.
- Build diversity and inclusion within the profession, AASLH, and our audiences.

In crafting your proposal, consider what your colleagues can learn from you, your institution, and others as you strive to:

1. Foster financial and organizational sustainability
2. Engage audiences
3. Address the needs of partners, constituents, and stakeholders
4. Evaluate and quantify organizational impact
5. Underscore the relevance of historical awareness in a democratic society

Requirements

Each session must have an organizer responsible for finding other speakers and coordinating logistics. All organizers must be affiliated with an institutional member or be an AASLH individual member. Topics for sessions should fall into at least one of the categories listed on page one of the Proposal Form. **Proposals must be submitted on a Call for Proposals form through AASLH's online submission system.** [To access the form, click here.](#) For more information, visit the AASLH website, www.aaslh.org, or contact Bethany Hawkins at Hawkins@aslh.org or by phone at 615-320-3203.

If you've got ideas but you're not up for submitting a formal proposal, don't despair! The 2018 session will include times for less formal presentations and discussions in an "UNconference" format. Pop-Up Sessions will allow you to submit topics on the fly for roundtable discussions while in Kansas City. Finally, need an idea for a session proposal, you will find a list on the AASLH website at <http://about.aaslh.org/conference/>.

Sincerely,

Tim Grove
2018 Annual Meeting Program Chair
National Air and Space Museum
Smithsonian Institution

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- 1) **Select a Topic:** AASLH is the largest national organization dedicated to solely to history museum leadership and management. The AASLH annual meeting is a rare opportunity for professionals from around the country to discuss individual perspectives on common issues. In proposing a topic to present at the meeting, consider: the relevance of the topic to broader issues facing the history museum community; the available data, evidence, documented impact, and illustrative information on the topic; and the potential for the topic to inform discussions and generate vigorous dialogue among colleagues.
- 2) **Choose a Format:** Sessions at the AASLH annual meeting are held in four different formats:
 1. **Discussion Sessions** are typically 75-minutes long and focused less on presenters than on the participants themselves. Some specific formats include (but are not limited to):
 - **Roundtables (75 minutes)** The focus is on audience discussion—consider a specific issue in informal group discussion led by several session leaders (including the organizer). Discussion leaders should use effective techniques to stimulate maximum group participation at each table or within the entire audience. Should have 1-4 presenters to prime conversation and inform it.
 - **Conversation Starter (75 minutes)** The focus is audience discussion. One facilitator poses a predetermined question/situation/challenge and invites attendees to participate. The facilitator monitors the discussion to keep on track as a guide on the side, not a sage on the stage. Should have 1 facilitator.
 2. **Panels (75 minutes)** examine historical or professional problems/issues and includes one chair (who may serve as a speaker) and up to three panelists. They should emphasize takeaways for participants, not just a show-and-tell. Panelists should provide contrasting perspectives and represent varied institutions (i.e. budget, mission, location, etc.). Presenters should allow ample time for questions and answers. Should include 1-4 panelists including moderator.
 3. **Case Studies (35 minutes)** present an issue or project from one site or organization from which other attendees can learn lessons or gain ideas to take back to their institutions. Topics for the case studies must be very focused to make the most of the short time for presentations and allow for audience questions. Should include no more than two panelists.
 4. **Longform Sessions.** These sessions are longer than Discussion and Panel sessions and occur in half- or full-day segments on Wednesday or Saturday of the meeting.
 - **Workshops** (full- or half-day sessions on Wednesday or Saturday) teach special skills in a small group setting. Workshops include appropriate printed materials. Proposals should specify the particular skills the workshop will teach as well as the methods and techniques instructors will use. Participants in workshop sessions pay fees which contribute to the conference budget and presenters and panelists all contribute their presentations in-kind. Workshops can have 1-2 instructors.
 - **Labs** (half-day session on Saturday) are informal, hands-on educational experiences that usually occur off-site. They last approximately two to three hours including time for transportation. Participants in lab sessions pay fees which contribute to the conference budget and presenters and panelists all contribute their presentations in-kind. Should include 1-4 facilitators.
- 3) **Select Presenters:** AASLH requires that you, as the person submitting the session, serve as the session organizer responsible for logistics, requests for materials and equipment, communication with participants and AASLH staff, and leading the session itself. *Session chairs must be affiliated with an AASLH institutional member or hold an individual membership.* Most sessions include three presenters: a chairperson plus two presenters. (If more than two presenters are listed, the program committee may accept the session but will remove presenters as it deems

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appropriate.) In order to involve as many people as possible in the meeting, no one can participate in more than two sessions.

- 4) Session proposals must specifically highlight central issues the proposal addresses and their significance to the field of state and local history and clearly articulate the main points the proposed session will address.
- 5) **Complete the Session Proposal Form online:**
 1. [Submit all session proposals here.](#)
 2. [Download a hard copy of the form here.](#)
- 6) **Submit your Proposal:** Submit your proposal online by December 8. Session chairs will be notified of their proposal's status by February 15, 2018.
- 7) **Registration Fees & Cost:** Organizers and presenters must register for at least one day of the annual meeting. Speakers are encouraged to take advantage of their attendance and register for the full meeting. Discounts are not given for meeting registration. AASLH does not pay travel costs or honoraria for any session chairs or presenters. Session chairs are responsible for making sure that all presenters register for the annual meeting.
- 8) **Scheduled Sessions:** AASLH planning staff will assign all session times and dates. Submission of a proposal indicates your willingness to accept the schedule as assigned. You may submit a request for a specific date or time; however we cannot guarantee that we can honor all requests.