AASLH promotes the relevance of history.

AASLH acts to build diversity and inclusiveness.

AASLH cultivates an experimental and creative spirit within AASLH and among constituents and partners.

AASLH encourages sustainability and transparency.

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HISTORY RELEVANCE

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Debating Confederate monuments. Disputing “alternative facts.” Contextualizing the day’s news and news sources. History has never felt more relevant. Most of my travels in 2017 for conferences in Abilene, TX, Indianapolis, IN, St. Louis, MO, Boise, ID, Nantucket, MA, Sharonville, OH, Denver, CO, Washington, DC (a few times!), and of course, Austin, TX, for the AASLH annual meeting, had to do with promoting the relevance of history. When I did a webinar in November for the Wisconsin Historical Society, which reached participants in another dozen states, it was on the same topic: how AASLH and other organizations are articulating why history matters.

Relevance is a lead strategic goal for AASLH, and another top goal is promoting inclusivity. “Relevant history is inclusive history,” is how the two are linked in AASLH’s Diversity & Inclusion Statement. From travel to staffing to governance, from award guidelines to how we organize the annual meeting, and from book and article topics to the projects of committees, we are focusing on making AASLH, the field, and the work of history organizations more diverse, inclusive, and intentionally relevant.

A great part of what staff and committees do is to learn about and highlight the exciting successes that our members are having in being more relevant through inclusive practices and programs. Our role is to lead where we can and to try to share these examples on social media, in our publications, and in our programs so that we amplify your great work.

A major step on the path of relevance in 2017 was adding a new staff position (bringing the office to a total of nine people), the External Relations Coordinator. Among other duties, the position supports the work of the History Relevance initiative (historyrelevance.com) and allows us to begin planning around the nation’s 250th anniversary, which itself will be an avenue for promoting the relevance of historical organizations, sites, societies, and museums over the next nine years.

In 2017 we fully integrated history relevance, as well as AASLH’s other strategic goals, into the Call for Proposals for the Annual Meeting and into the guidelines for submissions to our Leadership in History Awards program. Additionally, we launched an Enhancement program for the Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations (StEPs), in part to make relevance and inclusivity new focal points.

Created eight years ago, StEPs is an AASLH program which today has more than 930 very small to medium-sized institutions participating, so the potential reach of the program and the best practices we include is quite exciting.

In 2018 we will focus the 2018 Annual Meeting’s theme, I AM History, on the theme of inclusivity, next year’s theme, Truth or Consequences, will emphasize how united we all are in our varied approaches to teaching historical thinking and to showing its pertinence to everyday life. I hope to see you in Kansas City on September 26-29!

Sincerely,

John R. Dichtl
President & CEO
AASLH continues to play a leading role in the History Relevance initiative—a broad coalition of historians and museum professionals working to re-brand history as something not just “nice,” but essential. Since 2014, this collaborative effort has helped change the way history museums and organizations talk about the value and impact of their work. More than 200 organizations have endorsed the History Relevance Value of History statement, which highlights seven distinct ways history is essential, and have begun integrating its language into their work. Through these efforts, the History Relevance initiative has begun cultivating a critical mass of people and institutions talking about history in similar ways and making the case to the public about why our work matters.

AASLH is a central partner in the History Relevance coalition, playing an essential role in both facilitating and amplifying the group’s work. We’ve carved out space for History Relevance activities at our annual meeting, including panels, roundtable discussions, and major meetings of the group’s steering committee. We’re planning webinars and workshops with other History Relevance partners to help spread the message about the value of history to members and beyond. AASLH has also taken the lead on pursuing grant funds for History Relevance to develop a community conversations series, research public perceptions of history, and develop common metrics of impact for organizations to employ in their evaluations. AASLH continues to make the relevance of history central to our work!

Darren Walker and Dina Bailey discuss how cultural institutions can face challenges with courage and innovation at the 2017 AASLH Annual Meeting in Austin, TX.

At the Annual Meeting in Austin, we held a History Relevance roundtable discussion titled “When I Say ‘History,’ You Say… ‘What?’” This session brought together representatives from Austin-area community organizations not focused on history to discover more about their perceptions of the field. This session helped clarify the parallels between different non-profit sectors and helped us better understand what other people and organizations think about history. There will be a similar session at the 2018 meeting in Kansas City, as well as a Community Forum.

In a new collaboration with the National Council on Public History and an editorial team of public history leaders, AASLH is helping to develop and promote the Inclusive Historian’s Handbook. This reference resource—born digital and free to use—will offer a critical tool to help public history practitioners make their work more equity-focused and inclusive. The Handbook will provide key insights, concrete examples, and practical wisdom to a range of public history professionals working to improve inclusive historical practice.

Attendees participate in an annual meeting session.
I can say with certainty that AASLH is a lively and energetic organization. It is driven by an extensive network of committed volunteers who give their time to the work of our field and AASLH’s role in it. It is governed by Council members who address the complicated issues and who also enjoy their work together. And AASLH is staffed by a capable staff, skilled at juggling AASLH’s work at the national and the grassroots level.

Because that’s what we are, a grassroots organization, working at the state and local level to bring history to the present and into the lives of all around us. We can open doors and we can open minds, if we don’t step back and succumb to today’s pressures to splinter and fragment. We must step forward, we must lean in, gathering our courage, and bringing with us into today’s world the stories and challenges of those who lived before us.

So I ask you to challenge yourselves. Look around you. Who is left out of your museum’s interpretation or of your community’s exhibits? Who could be attending your programs but isn’t? Try something different. Ask people who don’t visit what it would take to get them to your site, then listen and act.

We’re all in this together. Let’s all act that way.

Katherine Kane
AASLH Council Chair
Harriet Beecher Stowe Center

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.

Truth or Consequences is a thread woven through the stories told in many of Kansas City’s 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. Plan to join in the discussion. Registration will open in early June.
AASLH continues to develop new programs to push the boundaries of the history field. One of our most recent endeavors in that regard is Master Local Historians. This program hopes to link avocational historians with the resources and training that history museums and institutions are uniquely positioned to offer.

*Master Local Historians will allow the public to pursue personally relevant history projects with guidance from history professionals, creating a cadre of passionate history advocates with a sophisticated understanding of the historian's craft in communities around the country.*

Our hope is that Master Local Historians will democratize the historical process and allow museums to engage with their surrounding communities in new ways. By meeting the public where they are, Master Local Historians uses community members’ personal interests as part of a broader project to enhance critically important historical thinking skills and develop public understanding of professional historical practice. In 2017, we received funding from Humanities Tennessee to begin developing and piloting the program curriculum; this phase will begin at the East Tennessee History Center, Tennessee State Library and Archives, and Collierville History Museum in Spring 2018. AASLH also began seeking funding from other sources to roll the program out on a national level. Stay tuned for more details on this exciting new program!

*Above: Master Local Historians Planning Retreat at Travellers Rest in Nashville, TN.*

AASLH is leading an effort to develop field-wide goals and themes to anchor the various commemoration efforts developing around the country.

Though the “Semiquincentennial” commemoration will surely be wide ranging, AASLH is working to advocate for the field and to encourage collaboration and cooperation among the varied stakeholders. Beginning in 2018, we’ll be discussing this effort more broadly, including at our Annual Meeting in Kansas City.

**U.S. 250TH COMMEMORATION**

AASLH is always looking for new ways to lead and serve the history field. Recently, we put together a Task Force and Advisory Committee to begin planning and organizing for commemorating the 250th anniversary of the United States in 2026. Bringing together historians, museum professionals, and institutions from across the country,

**NEW POSITIONS**

Over the past couple of years, we have also gone out on a limb with the creation of new staff positions to serve emerging needs. In 2016, recognizing the potential for growth of webinars and online workshops and their utility to the field, we created a new staff position: Education and Service Coordinator. Since that time, we’ve more than doubled our online continuing education offerings and have reached more than 2,300 people this year alone. In 2017, as AASLH began developing new programs and partnerships, we created another new staff position, our External Relations Coordinator. This position has allowed us to expand our role in strategic initiatives like History Relevance and the U.S. 250th, and to develop new programs like Master Local Historians. In both cases, we’ve used our resources to develop new ways to serve our members and serve the field.

**CONTINUING EDUCATION REVIEW**

This year, the AASLH Continuing Education program has continued to grow! In 2017, we offered more webinars, online courses, and in-person workshops and served 2,351 people.

**In 2017, AASLH Continuing Education events were held in the following cities**

- Indianapolis, IN
- Mason Neck, VA
- Portland, ME
- Kansas City, MO
- Dallas, TX
- Atlanta, GA
- Indianapolis, IN
- Mason Neck, VA
- Portland, ME
- Kansas City, MO
- Dallas, TX
- Atlanta, GA
LEADERSHIP IN HISTORY AWARDS

AWARD OF DISTINCTION

Lonnie G. Bunch, III
Historian, author, curator, and educator Lonnie G. Bunch, III is the founding director of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture. In this position he promotes the museum’s mission to help audiences see African American history as American history, and provides strategic leadership in areas of fundraising, collections, and academic and cultural partnerships. “The Award of Distinction is AASLH’s highest honor, given to special colleagues whose commitment, leadership, contributions, and perseverance show the way for the rest of us,” said Katherine Kane, Chair of AASLH’s Council and Executive Director of the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center. “I am delighted that Lonnie is being recognized with this award.” Lonnie Bunch’s tireless dedication to telling the story of all Americans through solid scholarship and engaging exhibits has made him a mentor and inspiration to countless public historians who believe in the transformative power of good history.

AWARD OF MERIT

Middlesex County Historical Society
Middlesex, CT
Founded in 1901 on the 250th anniversary of the Town of Middletown, the Middlesex County Historical Society is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to preserving the history of Middletown and Middlesex County, and providing programs for adults and children to increase their understanding of the area’s history. The society operates a museum and host programming including walking tours, reenactments, and a lecture series. They also support collections scholarship and a youth research competition. MCHS is a small institution in a small town doing important work to educate, preserve, challenge, and inspire their community.

Region 1
(Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont)
Cambridge Historical Society, Cambridge, MA; The Somerville Museum and Charan Devereaux, Somerville, MA; Paul Revere Memorial Association/Paul Revere House, Boston, MA

Region 2
(Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island)
Fairfield Museum and History Center, Fairfield, CT; Lockwood-Mathews Mansion Museum, Norwalk, CT; Middlesex County Historical Society, Middlesex, CT; Averill Eraths, Sarah Hardley-Cox, Marisa Rhodes, Elizabeth Garnet Masarik, Katie Smyser, Tommy Bottaccio, and Dan Wallace, Buffalo, NY; The Historic Tavern Tour presented by Johanna Yaun, Gooshen, NY; Little Compton Historical Society, Little Compton, RI

Region 3
(Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania)
Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, Philadelphia, PA; Historical and Genealogical Society of Somerset County, Inc., Somerset, PA; Jefferson County Historical Society, Brookville, PA; The State Museum of Pennsylvania, Harrisburg, PA

Region 4
(Alabama, Florida, Georgia)
William E. O’Brien, Jupiter, FL; Orange County Regional History Center, Orlando, FL; Museum of History and Holocaust Education at Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA; Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace, Girl Scouts of the USA, Savannah, GA

Region 5
(Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia)
Louisville Story Program, Louisville, KY; North Carolina Museum of History, Raleigh, NC; UNC Greensboro Public History Program, Greensboro, NC, South Carolina ETV, Betsy Newman, and Patrick Hayes, Columbia, SC; Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association, Mount Vernon, VA

Region 6
(Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio)
Rachel Boyle, Chelsea Desault, Maggie McClain, and Kelly Schmidt, Chicago, IL; Byron Forest Preserve District, Byron, IL; Indiana Historical Society, WISH-TV; WANE-TV; WSJV-TV; WEVD-TV, Lee Nussan, and Dennis Neary, Indianapolis, IN; Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, IN; Indiana Women’s Prison History Project, Indianapolis, IN; Michigan History Center, Lansing, MI; Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Library & Museums, Fremont, OH

Region 7
(Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee)
None

Region 8
(New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas)
Los Alamos Historical Society & Quattrocchi Associates, Los Alamos, NM; Siegfried S. Hecker and the Los Alamos Historical Society and Museum, Los Alamos, NM; Bullock Texas State History Museum, Austin, TX; Stark Museum of Art and Brigham Young University Museum of Art, Orange, TX; Ellen Walker Rienastra, Jo Ann Stiles, and Judith Walker Linsley, Beaumont, TX; Donald Paul Zuiris, Corpus Christi, TX

Region 9
(Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin)
National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library, Cedar Rapids, IA; Minnesota Discovery Center, Chisholm, MN; Virginia M. Wright-Peterson, Rochester, MN; History Museum at the Castle, Appleton, WI

Region 10
(Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska)
Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, KS; St. Louis County Library and St. Louis County Parks St. Louis, MO; Missouri History Museum, St. Louis, MO

Region 11
(Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming)
None

Region 12
(Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington)
Oregon Historical Society, Portland, OR; Cowlitz County Historical Museum, Kelso, WA

Region 13
(California and Hawaii)
Auat Studio, San Francisco, CA; The Italian American Museum of Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA; Hawaiian Mission Houses Historic Site and Archives and Awaiaulu Inc., Honolulu, HI

Region 14
(Arizona, Nevada, Utah)
None

* History in Progress (HIP) award winners
2017 marked the beginning of the two-year StEPs Enhancement Project to review and update AASLH’s Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations. Introduced to the field in 2009, StEPs currently has more than 930 small- to mid-sized organizations across the country using the self-study program to assess their policies and practices and make improvements that are aligned with national museum standards.

Recruitment of volunteers began in the fall. Teams will be assembled in early 2018 to review current StEPs workbook content and create new material in seven areas identified as priorities: Creativity and Experimentation; Digital Collections; Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity; Environmental Sustainability; Finance, Transparency, and Fraud Prevention; Fundraising; and Impact, Engagement, and Relevance.

Undoubtedly, organizations already enrolled in StEPs will want to know how an updated version of the workbook will affect their work in the program. The current plan is to allow them to continue using the original version of the workbook for twelve to eighteen months after the new version is published in early 2019. This means two workbook versions will be in use until at least early 2020.

A few short weeks prior to the 2017 AASLH Annual Meeting in Austin, Hurricane Harvey devastated parts of Texas. Days later, Hurricane Irma made contact with Florida and other parts of the Southeast. Due to the generosity of AASLH Members and friends, the AASLH Hurricane Cultural Relief Fund raised $14,000 in just over a month. With the fund, AASLH provided twenty-six mini-grants to aid organizations in their recovery process. This included supplies, restoration work, and salvage activities necessitated by the storms.

“Seeing the devastation across parts of Texas the week before the AASLH Annual Meeting in Austin spurred us to take action,” said John Dichtl. “We are so grateful for the generosity of the history community and were honored to be able to provide an avenue to help institutions that were affected.”

**AASLH STAFF**

**John Dichtl**
President & CEO

**Bethany Hawkins**
Chief of Operations

**Aja Bain**
Program & Publications Coordinator

**Cherie Cook**
Senior Program Manager

**Natalie Flammia**
Education & Service Coordinator

**Darah Fogarty**
Marketing Coordinator

**Terry Jackson**
Membership & Database Coordinator

**John Garrison Marks**
External Relations Coordinator

Fort Nisqually Living History Museum in Tacoma, WA is a 2017 StEPs graduate.
MEMBERSHIP REPORT

We exist to serve our members, advocating for their needs on a national level and supporting their practice of history on a local level.

Membership dues are the wellspring of our efforts, comprising nearly 40 percent of AASLH’s annual operating budget.

AASLH membership was 5,291 as of 6/30/17.

AASLH welcomed 832 new members in 2017, an increase from 2016.

The Academic Program membership now serves over 274 faculty and students.

The New Professional Membership category has grown to 159 members.

We estimate the total number of people served through the Institutional memberships to be almost 11,000.

AASLH maintained a retention rate of 82.2%.

As an organization, we exist to serve our members, advocating for their needs on a national level and supporting their practice of history on a local level. It is precisely because of our members’ innovation, expertise, and commitment that we have the reputation and authority needed to advance the field.

Whether serving on volunteer committees, sharing new ideas at the Annual Meeting, or working hard in local communities to make history matter, AASLH members are essential to the field of state and local history. Your membership dues allow us to continue supporting your work and gathering together passionate practitioners of history for greater collective impact.

Your membership matters. Thank you for being a part of this effort.

FINANCIAL REPORT

FY 2017 Audited Statements • Year Ending June 30, 2017

Statement of Financial Position • Current Assets

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<th>2017</th>
<th>2016</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Cash and cash equivalents</td>
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<td>Accounts receivable</td>
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<td>Other assets</td>
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<td>Non-current accounts receivable, net</td>
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<td>Property and equipment</td>
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<td>Investments, substantially restricted</td>
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<td>Total Assets</td>
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Statement of Financial Position • Liabilities and Capital

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<tr>
<th>2017</th>
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<tr>
<td>Accounts payable</td>
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<td>Unearned revenue</td>
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<td>Net assets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
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<td>Temporarily restricted</td>
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<td>Permanently restricted</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total net assets</td>
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<td>Total liabilities and net assets</td>
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Statement of Activities

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<tr>
<th>Revenues, gains, and other support</th>
<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th>Temporarily Restricted</th>
<th>Permanently Restricted</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total revenues, gains, and other support</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>$1,659,805</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operating expenses</td>
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<td>$973,539</td>
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<td>Supporting services</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>$509,196</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Operating Expenses</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>$1,482,735</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change in net assets from operations</td>
<td>$42,202</td>
<td>$134,868</td>
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<td>$177,070</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net assets, beginning of year</td>
<td>($182,921)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>$1,512,334</td>
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<td>Net assets, year-end</td>
<td>($140,719)</td>
<td>$134,868</td>
<td>$1,512,334</td>
<td>$1,506,483</td>
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Statement of Cash Flow

| Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents | $43,849          |
| Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year     | $146,617         |
| Total                                           | $190,466         |
AASLH 2018 ANNUAL MEETING

TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES

SEPTEMBER 26-29

KANSAS CITY, MO