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**Field Services Alliance Annual Meeting
AASLH Annual Meeting and Conference
New Orleans**

September 20, 2000

Minutes

Attending:

- Jon Austin, Illinois State Historical Society, Springfield
- Britta Bloomberg, Minnesota Historical Society, Minneapolis
- J.D. Britton, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus
- Robbie Davis, South Carolina State Museum, Columbia
- Phil Edin, Oregon Historical Society, Portland
- John Harris, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis
- Carol Harsh, Museums on Main Street, Washington, DC
- Harry Klinkhamer, Illinois State Historical Society, Springfield
- Tom McKay, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison
- Jason Meyers, Illinois State Historical Society, Springfield
- Pat Miller, Illinois Heritage Association, Champaign
- Karla Nicholson, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort
- Rick Read, Oregon Historical Society, Portland
- Connie Rendfield, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis
- John Schleicher, Nebraska Historical Society, Lincoln
- Mary Turner, Illinois Association of Museums, Springfield
- Andy Verhoff, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus
- Sandra Washington, National Park Service, Omaha
- Jo Ann Williford, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh

The annual meeting—or get together—of the Field Services Alliance was called to order at 1:00 p.m., taking place on Wednesday, September 20, 2000, during the annual meeting of the American Association for State and Local History at the Radisson Hotel in New Orleans.

Chair's Report

Chair Karla Nicholson from the Kentucky Historical Society welcomed all present and asked everyone to introduce themselves and their affiliations and to give a brief and interesting story about something that happened in their work lives during the past year.

Before proceeding, Karla noted that the annual FSA dinner event would take place at the

Red Fish Grill in the French Quarter and invited everyone to come.

Karla mentioned that there were no minutes for the FSA meeting in Baltimore, and so had nothing to report. She noted that John Schleicher from Nebraska had agreed to serve as FSA Secretary to keep the minutes, but since he was arriving in New Orleans late, J.D. Britton from Ohio agreed to take the minutes in John's place.

In February 2000, the FSA held a winter retreat in Kentucky, and Karla summarized what took place during the two-day event. According to Karla and those in attendance, the retreat was useful especially as it gave FSA time to:

- Look back at its strategic plan and update the goals and tasks to account for the current needs of the FSA and its field services members.
- Focus on "real" tasks and assign FSA members to accomplish them.
- Renew the relationship with AASLH away from the AASLH annual meeting where there is no chance to discuss or enhance the relationship.

Mary Turner from Illinois moved that FSA make the winter retreat a permanent event. John Harris of Indiana seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Goal Reports

Since the FSA Strategic Plan has five goals with goal chairs and committees, Karla asked that each goal chair give a report to the full FSA.

Goal One—Karla Nicholson, J.D. Britton, Tom McKay, David Nystuen, and Rick Read

Maintain and further develop forum to share information and promote collegiality—with eight tasks. Karla reported for the committee:

- Made plans for the New Orleans FSA meeting and began planning for the FSA meeting next year at the AASLH meeting in Indianapolis. She noted that John Harris was serving on the local arrangements committee and would take special care of our group.
- Maintained the FSA membership list that was updated and sent to all members following the meeting in Baltimore. A new updated list will be sent to members following the New Orleans meeting.
- Coordinated the semi-annual report submitted by some of the field services members and distributed to everyone prior to the New Orleans meeting. This report reflected individual field services office accomplishments and was done to free up time at the annual meeting or get together during the AASLH conference.
- Began preliminary thought about developing a survey or questionnaire to discover other field services operations (besides those on the FSA membership list) in the United States and possibly Australia and Canada. Work on the survey will continue over the next year.
- Began preliminary thought about developing standing rules for the FSA. Karla said that standing rules would help to create a sense of permanency to, and structure for, the FSA and clarify procedure. The standing rules would not be elaborate or highly formal. Over the next year, the committee will draft job descriptions for officers—the chair and secretary—and determine their terms of office. They would also draft descriptions of the meetings—annual meeting at the AASLH conference and the winter retreat. The standing rules would also attempt to categorize field services operations in the event that FSA is

successful in attaining funds to bring field services people with small budgets to either the annual meeting at AASLH or winter retreat.

There was some discussion of why some of the FSA members do not come to the meetings or even to the AASLH meeting. It was suggested that FSA might contact IMLS to see if we can get a grant to give to field services offices that can't afford to come to the FSA meetings.

Goal Two—J.D. Britton Debbie Kmetz, Jason Meyers, John Schleicher, Jo Ann Williford

Strengthen Field Services/AASLH collaboration—with eight tasks. J.D. reported for the committee:

- Organized a FSA roundtable session for the New Orleans AASLH annual meeting.
- Submitted an article on the FSA for *History Dispatch*, which Karla wrote.
- Sought FSA representation on the AASLH editorial committee—J.D. agreed to be the representative.
- Affirmed that all FSA members or their institutions are members of AASLH—all in attendance at the New Orleans meeting indicated that they are members.

Over the next year, the committee will organize a FSA roundtable at the AASLH annual meeting in Indianapolis, write an article for *Dispatch*, and seek FSA representation on AASLH committees. The committee will also develop a plan to support AASLH's Census on History program and seek ways for FSA and AASLH to collaborate.

Goal Three—Pat Miller, Robbie Davis, Sarah Larson, Tom McKay, Matt McMichael, Andy Verhoff

To develop a theory and practice for field services work—with three tasks. Pat reported for the committee:

In preparation for putting together a resource manual for field services representatives, Pat presented the "top ten characteristics of highly effective field services programs" and the "top ten characteristics of highly effective field services personnel." She suggested that the manual might also contain "best practices" articles for all the issues that field services personnel deal with. The manual might be given to AASLH to make available to other field services persons or to institutions that might want to develop a field services operation. Following Pat's report, a discussion ensued about the need of "best practices" articles. John Harris and others suggested that the manual should focus on the ways in which field services people perform their jobs and the situations they face—for example, dealing with colleagues from their own institutions who don't understand or appreciate the need to provide service to "outside" organizations, or working with vendors or consultants to get "in-house" jobs done, or talking with newspaper reporters about local historical societies. It was suggested that a list of issues and circumstances or situations that field services personnel face might be developed and individual FSA members might write short pieces on them. These could be put in the manual.

Goal Four—Mary Turner, Debbie Kmetz, J.D. Britton, Cherie Cook, Harry Klinkhamer, Rhonda Newton, Rick Read, Connie Rendfeld, Andy Verhoff

To continue to develop and share materials to help field services professionals do their work—with four tasks. Mary Turner reported for the committee:

The committee had developed a survey to find out: 1) the most frequent questions posed to field services personnel and 2) questions field services people would like to ask. Lists of those questions were distributed. It was thought that field services resource manuals could be developed to deal with the issues.

After much discussion, the FSA members in attendance decided that creating such a manual might be "re-inventing the wheel." Instead, it was decided that creating a bibliography of books and articles on various field services operation areas might be more helpful. John Harris also suggested that FSA members bring their favorite resource book or article to the winter retreat. Further discussion of resource manuals will take place at the winter retreat. Mary also mentioned that the committee will continue to maintain a listing of technical inserts, in other words, carry on the work of Cherrie Cook several years ago.

Goal Five—John Harris, Jean Cutler, Robbie Davis, Matt McMichael.

To utilize and encourage others to take advantage of emerging communication technology—with five tasks. John Harris reported for the committee:

- John noted that the FS-List has remained stable—about the same number of people using this system of communication—but the number of messages increased.
- Completed the FSA web site with AASLH and thanked AASLH for finding a means to finish the job. John asked that any FSA member office that had not sent him their URL to do so because he needed them to finish creating links to their web sites.
- The committee experimented with internet chat communication many times and provided a way for monthly FSA discussions. It has its good and bad points, and the committee will continue to experiment with the technology over the next year. John said the we field services people might want to explore chat technology as a means to meet and consult with their constituents.
- The committee also experimented with a design concept for the FSA web site. John passed around six versions of a FSA logo and asked members in attendance to vote for their choice. The one that received the most votes will be put on the web site.

Report from AASLH—Sandra Washington

- The AASLH Education Committee will continue its workshop series, as they have been very successful over the past several years. Next year AASLH will offer eight workshops on two topics—four on each.
- AASLH has developed a million-dollar campaign to build an endowment, and the campaign thus far has been successful.
- Sandra noted that AASLH is holding two focus groups at the New Orleans annual meeting to examine *History News* in preparation for making some changes. High on the priority is concern over themed issues.

2001 Winter Retreat

Discussion turned to the winter retreat, and Pat Miller and Mary Turner offered to host the FSA meeting. They had checked on conference facilities and overnight rooms at Pierre

Marquette State Park in Illinois and found them to be reasonable.**Tom McKay of Wisconsin made a motion that we have the winter retreat at Pere Marquette.Jo Ann Williford of North Carolina seconded the motion.Motion passed.**

Robbie Davis of South Carolina offered to host the winter retreat in 2002, noting facilities at Myrtle Beach would be perfect.**Mary Turner made a motion to have the meeting in South Carolina.John Harris seconded the motion.Motion passed.**

No Other Business

Presentations

Pat Miller gave a presentation of her IMLS funded project—"From Mission to Marking," a course on collection management.This five session, twelve-hour course takes three days.

Karla Nicholson gave a presentation of her IMLS funded project—"Intensive Museum Management Seminar."The seminar is an annual event and each covers most aspects of museum operations over a forty-eight hour time period.

As there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by J.D. Britton for John Schleicher