



AASLH
American Association
for State and Local History

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Field Services Alliance Winter Retreat Pere Marquette Lodge, Grafton, IL March 4-6, 2001

Minutes

Submitted by Katherine Dill, Secretary Pro Tem

Attending:

- Melissa Davis, Humanities Tennessee
- Robbie Davis, South Carolina State Museum
- Terry Davis, American Association for State and Local History
- Katherine Dill, Indiana Historical Society
- Betty Fugate, Kentucky Historical Society
- Tim Glines, Minnesota Historical Society
- Julie Hale, Missouri Arts Council
- John Harris, Indiana Historical Society
- Carol Harsh, Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibitions Service
- Lois Herr, Kansas Historical Society
- Pene Lane, Humanities Tennessee
- Robyn Levan, Missouri Humanities Council
- Tom McKay, State Historical Society of Wisconsin
- Pat Miller, Illinois Heritage Association
- Karla Nicholson, Kentucky Historical Society
- Connie Rendfeld, Indiana Historical Society
- Elizabeth Stith, Kentucky Historical Society
- Mary Turner, Illinois Association of Museums, Illinois Historic Preservation Agency
- Andy Verhoff, Ohio Historical Society
- Patricia Zahn, Missouri Humanities Council

4 March 2001

Session 1: Getting Started

Karla Nicholson, FSA Chair, called the FSA winter retreat to order at 8:30 PM on March 4, 2001, at the Pere Marquette Lodge in Grafton, IL. She welcomed the participants and asked someone to volunteer to act as the FSA secretary for the retreat. Katherine Dill volunteered. Karla gave a brief history of the FSA meetings and the rationale for the winter retreat. After reviewing the agenda, Karla read the five FSA goals and asked everyone to introduce themselves, mention their affiliations, and talk about new initiatives.

5 March 2001

Session 2: Our Current Status

Karla called the meeting to order and reviewed FSA Current Status. Participants reviewed the New Orleans minutes and no

corrections were made. Andy motioned to accept the minutes and Pat seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Karla passed out the five FSA goals and reviewed goals I through III to determine what had been accomplished.

Goal I: Maintain and further develop forum to share information and promote collegiality among the field services professionals and other interested colleagues. Karla reported:

- FSA retreat has become an annual event.
- The next annual retreat will be in Myrtle Beach, SC.
- The New Orleans meeting was successfully planned and carried out.
- Standing rules for FSA have been proposed.

After discussion, it was agreed the committee will send a query to members of FSA to see if they are still interested in being included in FSA membership list and on FS list. Another query will be sent to other organizations to determine who else is doing field services and may be interested in joining FSA. We would like to expand membership to include a national representation.

Goal I Tasks

- Conduct mini-census of field services groups by contacting state administrators and humanities councils.
- FSA groups will submit annual reports and John will post them on the FSA web site.

Goal II: To strengthen the field services/AASLH collaboration. In the absence of Goal II committee members, Karla reported:

- The roundtable in New Orleans indicated a need in the historical community to teach people how to do field services. Terry will try to schedule a roundtable for small museum staff to discuss this at the September AASLH annual meeting.
- Two articles on FSA appeared in the AASLH *Dispatch*. Articles can also be printed in *History News* but they must fit with the theme of the publication.
- Robyn suggested exploring at the September Humanities Council national meeting the field services available to humanities council groups. FSA could also send a representative to the officers meeting in Mississippi at the end of July.

Goal II Tasks

- Andy and Karla will discuss holding a session at the AASLH annual meeting about how organizations can provide field services without operating a formal field services office. They will report back to Terry about this.
- Pene and Carol will investigate places and meetings where field service staff can give presentations about their services. Pene suggested pairing with humanities councils to share information and using the councils as springboards to begin field service offices.

Goal III: To develop a theory and methodology of practice for field service work:

Field Services—Who we are and what we do. Pat reported:

- The task force drafted the Top 10 lists. The group discussed and made changes to those lists. **Mary moved to accept the top ten lists as official FSA documents. Pat seconded. Motion passed.**
- John will post the lists on the FSA website, and Terry will write an article about the meeting and the top ten lists for the AASLH *Dispatch*.

Goal III Tasks

- Firm up Top 10 Lists and post them on the web
- Think about best practices and the materials field services offices should have to function well

Session 3: Committee Work Sessions

The meeting broke into two groups for work sessions.

Group A: Develop standing rules for FSA. Karla Nicholson, John Harris, Terry Davis, Tim Glines, Pat Miller, Robin Levan

After discussion, the group proposed

1. That FSA expand its officers to include a chair, vice-chair, and secretary
2. That the vice-chair shall succeed to the position of chair at the end of his/her term
3. That terms for officers be limited to two years without possibility of a second term
4. That a FSA webmaster be appointed to maintain the FSA website and FS-list duties
5. That a slate of officers be selected by a nominating committee named at the winter retreat during election years, and that the slate be presented and voted upon at the subsequent annual meeting.
6. That the following statement be adopted as a means of determining eligibility for membership in FSA: FSA members shall be paid staff members of organizations that have and promote an organized, ongoing program for delivery of services to small grass roots history organizations.
7. That FSA members present shall each have one vote in official actions taken at FSA meetings.

Group B: Develop proposed list of materials for a field services manual and bibliography:

Group members: Katherine Dill, Mary Turner, Connie Rendfeld, Tom McKay, Julie Hale, Robbie Davis, Lois Herr, Melissa Davis, Pene Lane, Carol Harsh, Andy Verhoff, Patricia Zahn, Betty Fugate, Elizabeth Stith

- The group agreed that rather than including areas of field service expertise, core practices would be listed. After discussion, the group divided up the topic list and included subtopics. Where appropriate, notes will be made to alert constituents to be aware of changing practices in particular areas, such as marking.
- The group also discussed what could be done to address challenges facing field service staff:
 1. presenting complementary information in a variety of formats to suit different learning styles,
 2. telling constituents through tutorials where to go when they have questions about specific topics,
 3. implementing an exchange program where staff from a new organization visit an FSA member's site and follow him or her around so they can see how a particular job is done,
 4. and giving on-site workshops to organizations that are thinking of beginning a field services office.

John will set up a private discussion area on the FSA website where members of Group B can continue to discuss the latter issue.

When the main session reconvened, everyone discussed whether individual FSA members were allowed one vote in FSA officer elections or whether each FSA organization was allowed one vote. **Elizabeth made a motion to allow one vote to each individual present at the FSA annual meeting. Tom seconded the motion. Motion passed.**

Karla announced that John Harris was appointed webmaster for life. He will manage the FS list and the FSA website. The position will be on the FSA officer slate.

Session 4: What's Going On in the Field of History?

AASLH update: Terry Davis

- Terry is interested in determining how AASLH can help FSA members get information to the broader public. Some ideas were publications and more topics in the style of the previously published board organizer binders.
- The AASLH strategic plan ends June.
- Terry would like the Professional Development Oversight Committee to replace the Education Committee. The new committee will look at the people and organizations in the field and at what AASLH does at the point where historical organizations and the public meet.

- AASLH is currently working on creating an Operating Plan that its staff will write. The focus of the plan will be implementing programs about planning or development. A pilot Performance Measurement Program will begin this summer.
- The Tribal Museum Program is underway. It is a two-year study of tribal museums and their needs. An advisory committee will work to get the annual \$2 million endowment authorized in 1992. The committee will attempt as well to get the \$18 million appropriated since 1992 but never collected.
- The National Historic Public Records Commission received another grant to work with tribal archives like the tribal museums. It will host tribal archivists in Washington, D.C. and hopes to establish an annual meeting of tribal archivists at the AASLH annual meeting.
- AASLH's endowment campaign has raised 87% of its \$1 million goal. The campaign ends at the annual meeting in Portland.
- Tara White, a new staff member to AASLH, leads the Census Program Committee. She is contacting historical institutions nationwide in search of partners.
- As part of the Family Community History efforts, the Pathways Program will be developing programs and materials for program models and tutorials AASLH members can present to the public. Pilot kits will be complete in several weeks and will be ready for distribution this summer. Program kits may be ready by March 2002.

Museums On Main Street Update: Carol Harsh

- The MOMS Program has a new brochure.
- The state humanities councils in 15 states will get MOMS exhibits over the next three years. Carol would like to foster partnerships between large museums and humanities councils so the councils can obtain some museum knowledge and make the most of the MOMS exhibits. Carol wants to think about ways FSA can help meet the professional needs of small museums which use the MOMS exhibits.
- The exhibit *Yesterday's Tomorrow* begins on March 6. The website is thematically based on the exhibit.

Karla said field services needs to address the attitude held by some in the museum/history professions that small historical organizations aren't worth helping. Suggestions to do this were

1. encouraging small organizations to use the "Gift of History" brochure and other literature to articulate why they are important to their communities,
2. more training for staff of small historical organizations, and
3. advocating for small historical societies and museums by promoting their successes.

Goal IV: To continue to develop and share materials that help field services professionals do their work. Mary Turner reported:

- The group agreed that using the existing material to create a critical bibliography of materials was a better idea than creating a new publication, since good materials are already available. FSA members could review one new technical leaflet, book, or article per year and write an evaluation, which will be posted on the FS list and later used in the bibliography. A list of the best sources would also be included in the bibliography. Terry also suggested putting together a website where forms (job descriptions, etc.) could be downloaded.
- The group reviewed and revised a handout Mary distributed with a subject list for FSA manuals and publications. Each section would have an introduction, a resource section, web site information, and a bibliography. Mary and Goal IV committee members will reorganize the list components into groups and subgroups.

Goal IV Tasks

- Reorganize the topics and subtopics on the subject list for manuals and publications
- Work on annotated bibliography by evaluating new resources as they are published

Goal V: To utilize and encourage others to take advantage of emerging communication technology. John Harris reported:

- John said there are currently 58 subscribers to the FS list and about 130 messages have been sent since September.
- The group agreed the on-line chats did not go well. Holding committee meetings in chat format worked well because the group was small.
- John will work on creating a link from the FSA site to the Local History Services's (LHS) site of international historical societies with web pages. The LHS site is located

at <http://www.indianahistory.org/resources.php?page=14>. John asked all FSA members to check the links to their state organizations and let him know of any changes. The group agreed historical organizations need help improving the quality of their web sites.

- FSA can help small museums use computer technology and find the information they want on the internet by conducting workshops about how to get on the web or working with Pat to write a technical leaflet. Terry said AASLH is looking at the possibility of acting as an application server for PastPerfect and other services. .
- Karla said FSA needs to help its constituents in three areas: computer access (daily collection management and operations uses), accessing information on the internet, development of better online resources for their educational mission. Field service offices could partner with libraries to hold collaborative workshops or conduct a program with an application service model to show groups how to get and use the internet as a tool, as well as how to use it to draw people to the museums and to accomplish their goals.

Goal V Tasks

- Expand FSA documents on the web
- Move FS list to the automatic AASLH listserv posting
- Help other FSA members communicate by creating designated areas for committee discussion
- Build links to FSA agencies, technical leaflets, and historical society directories

Wrap Up Session

Karla reviewed the goals list. Tom and Pat volunteered to sit on the nominating committee. The group agreed the outgoing FSA chair (in this case Karla) will also sit on the nominating committee.

For the five FSA goals, the FSA chair will chair Goal I. The vice chair will chair Goal II. The Goal III and Goal IV chairs will be appointed by the new chair, and those positions can be renewed.

Changes to goal committees were made.

Goal I members: Karla Nicholson, Chair; Carol Harsh; Tim Glines; Pat Miller; Rick Read.

Goal II members: J.D. Britton, Chair; Katherine Dill; Debbie Kmetz; Pene Lane; John Schleicher; Jo Ann Williford. *Ex officio*, Karla Nicholson.

Goal III members: Pat Miller, Chair; Robbie Davis; Katherine Dill; Sarah Larson; Tom McKay; Elizabeth Stith; Andy Verhoff. *Ex officio*, Karla Nicholson.

Goal IV members: Debie Kmetz and Mary Turner, Co-chairs; J.D. Britton; Cherie Cook; Terry Davis; Betty Fugate; Lois Herr; Rhonda Newman; Rick Read; Connie Rendfeld; Andy Verhoff. *Ex officio*, Karla Nicholson.

Goal V members: John Harris, Chair; Jean Cutler; Robbie Davis; Betty Fugate; Pene Lane; *Ex officio*, Karla Nicholson.

The goals list will be posted on the web, and any FSA member is invited to join a committee.

Making Plans

The FSA annual meeting will be held in Indianapolis from 1-5 PM on Wednesday, Sept. 12. The nominating slate will be ready in August and will be voted on at the September meeting. Annual field service reports should be given to Karla before August. FSA members should think about agenda items for the September meeting.

The next FSA winter retreat will be held in Myrtle Beach at the end of February 2002. Robbie has secured ocean-view rooms for FSA members for \$47 a night.

The 2001 FSA Winter Retreat was adjourned.