



AASLH
American Association
for State and Local History

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**Field Services Alliance Winter Retreat
Ocean Reef Resort, Myrtle Beach, SC
February 17-19, 2002**

Minutes

Submitted by Katherine Dill, Secretary

Attending:

Robbie Davis, South Carolina State Museum
Katherine Dill, Indiana Historical Society
Mary Edelen, South Dakota Historical Society
Tim Glines, Minnesota Historical Society
David Grabitske, Minnesota Historical Society
John Harris, Indiana Historical Society
Carol Harsh, Museums of Main Street, Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibit Service
Ann Johnson, Kentucky Historical Society
Harry Klinkhamer, American Association for State and Local History
Dixie McCaskill, South Carolina State Museum
Karla Nicholson, Kentucky Historical Society
Connie Rendfeld, Indiana Historical Society
Andy Verhoff, Ohio Historical Society
Tara White, American Association for State and Local History

17 February 2002

Session 1: Getting Reacquainted

Verhoff welcomed everyone and asked members to introduce themselves and talk about new initiatives at their institutions. He asked Rendfeld to consider serving as FSA vice-chair, with elections to be held on-line at a later date. She agreed. Harris gave a history of FSA. He also asked members to be sure their newsletters were being sent to all FSA members' offices.

18 February 2002

Session 2: FSA's Current Status

Verhoff called the meeting to order. Rendfeld moved to approve the minutes from the 2001 winter retreat. Dill seconded. The minutes were approved. Verhoff read the standing rules. After discussion, the group agreed that officers could serve in the same office multiple times

but not in consecutive terms. Glines moved to approve the change to the standing rules; Harris seconded. Motion carried.

Nicholson presented the results of a survey conducted of FSA members and interested colleagues. An interesting fact revealed by the survey is that no two field services offer exactly the same services. However, seven “core services” were apparent in most organizations: workshops, on-site consultations, resource or lending library, annual conference or meeting, printed newsletter, awards program, and surveys. Nicholson will circulate the complete results to FSA members.

Harris suggested FSA members with electronic newsletters make it known on the FS-LIST how others can sign up for their publications.

Session 3: Review FSA’s Goals and Task List

Committee leaders reported on the progress of their committees. Committee member lists were updated. The group of attendees was divided; Verhoff, Davis, Dill, Glines, Harsh, Klinkhamer, and Rendfeld discussed Goals I and II, and Nicholson, Edelen, Grabitske, Harris, McCaskill, Johnson, and White discussed Goals III, IV, and V. When the group reconvened, committee chairs reported on revised tasks and some discussion ensued.

Relating to Goal I, Harsch asked who was FSA’s target audience. The group agreed the audience included anyone in any organization doing any kind of field services work, although FSA’s focus should remain on small grass-roots historical organizations. Goal I’s mini-census will include questions similar to those on Nicholson’s survey so FSA can see the scope of services available to local historical organizations nationwide. The updated goals and tasks list is attached.

All committee chairs will look at their tasks and goal statements and revise them, as needed, with committee members’ feedback. Revised tasks should be prepared by the Portland meeting, and revised goal statements should be given to Verhoff by March 15.

Session 4: What’s Going on in the Field of History?

Harsch reported that MOMS/SITES is trying to explore new opportunities for partnering with state historical organizations. Thirty-three state humanities councils have worked with MOMS. Harsch gave a PowerPoint presentation about MOMS’s current traveling exhibits: Barn Again, Yesterday’s Tomorrows, and Produce for Victory. A fourth traveling exhibit is in development. Harsch said it would be possible for MOMS and FSA to partner to offer training sessions on administrative and interpretive topics. The sessions could occur during existing workshops MOMS holds to prepare local sites for hosting MOMS exhibits.

Klinkhamer said the new design for *History News* would be revealed in Spring 2003. The magazine will no longer be theme-driven. An advisory committee is working with the design team, and Klinkhamer is recruiting an FSA member to serve on the committee.

White is partnering with the National Trust to offer a 30-person conference in April in Westchester County, New York. The conference will examine in detail issues relative to historic house museums as well as help develop action plans to ensure stability and longevity. As a part of its Corporate History Program, AASLH has posted on its web page a statement of corporate values and principles that will help corporate organizations explain their relevance to American history. The Diversity In and For History Task Force is examining the implications of diversifying the public history field, museums collections, and trustees. The task force is drafting a proposal to partner with minority colleges to fund two scholarships for minority students in their junior years pursuing advanced degrees in history or preservation. A census of all the nation's historical organizations (excluding historical reenactors) is being created so the impact of such organizations on the local economy and community can be determined. A four-state pilot census program will run in 2003. An IMLS grant is funding the creation of Professional Development Quickly (PDQ), a component of AASLH's web page that will act as a clearinghouse for information on development opportunities. Any organization can post its offerings there. AASLH is working on posting on its web page PDF files of all its technical leaflets. It is considering creating a searchable database of all the leaflets and of *History News* articles written in the last five years.

Session 5: Why Should Our Organizations Provide Field Services?

Verhoff lead the session by asking a series of questions about why field services are important to communities as well as their parent organizations, why local history organizations are important, and how field services offices can measure their worth. Each FSA member had an opportunity to answer the questions, and Verhoff recorded all answers given. Like answers were combined, and FSA members rated their top five rationalizations for field services. The results of the exercises are attached.

Session 6: It's for Their Own Good, Isn't It?—What are the Responsibilities of an FS Officer?

Davis led the roundtable session focusing on how to deal with difficult situations field service professionals face when working in the field. Davis asked what kinds of situations required immediate response. The group agreed those where collections were being damaged or used improperly and where structural problems of a facility endangered the collections warranted quick action. Davis asked where field service officers' primary responsibility lie when they do site visits and how that impacts their response to the situation. Everyone felt protecting the state history and the collection representing it was the main concern. Responsibility to the client came second. Davis asked what was the key to taking a positive approach when confronting a difficult situation. The group came up with many answers, including maintaining museum standards, recognition of all points of view, and suggesting several solutions. Davis asked how a situation can be "fixed" if a field services officer goes too far. Acknowledgement and apologizing are crucial, but so are maintaining museum standards. Harris asked if it was ever appropriate to help push the

leader of a historical organization out of office, and the group agreed it was, if it was for the good of the organization.

Concluding Session: Making Plans for 2002

FSA is meeting at the AASLH meeting in Portland on Sept. 25 from 1 to 5 p.m. The meeting will be only for FSA members and interested colleagues. White and Klinkhamer will work with Verhoff to organize an FSA-hosted coffee break at the meeting for non-members to talk with FSA members.

Verhoff said possible dates for the 2003 winter retreat are Feb. 16-18 and Feb. 23-25. He will host the retreat in Ohio.

Grabitske moved to close the meeting and Harris seconded. Motion carried.