



AASLH
American Association
for State and Local History

1717 Church Street
Nashville, TN 37203-2991
Phone: 615/320-3203
Fax: 615/327-9013
membership@aslh.org
www.aslh.org

Field Services Alliance - 2004 Winter Retreat Nashville, Tennessee March 6-8, 2004

Minutes

Submitted by Melissa Davis, Secretary

Attending:

Chuck Backus, Kentucky Historical Society
J.D. Britton, Ohio Historical Society
Melissa Davis, Humanities Tennessee
Katie Wharton, Humanities Tennessee
Katherine Dill, Indiana Historical Society
Timothy Glines, Minnesota Historical Society
David Grabitske, Minnesota Historical Society
Carol Harsh, Museums on Main Street
Harry Klinkhamer, American Association for State and Local History
John M. Harris, Indiana Historical Society
Tom McKay, Wisconsin Historical Society
Pat Miller, Illinois Heritage Association
Karla Nicholson, American Association for State and Local History
Connie Rendfeld, Indiana Historical Society

6 March 2004

Session 1: Getting Reacquainted

Rendfeld welcomed all and asked members to introduce themselves and talk about new initiatives at institutions since the annual meeting in Providence last September. Each agency present reported.

7 March 2004

Session 2: Update on FSA's Current Status

Rendfeld called the meeting to order. Participants reviewed the minutes from the 2003 annual meeting and a minor correction was made. Grabitske moved to approve the minutes. Dill seconded. The minutes were approved.

Rendfeld reported that the survey of membership is postponed as a revised survey instrument is considered, and led a discussion of proposed changes to the membership survey. Suggestions included revising the list of service categories to eliminate obsolete services, to more accurately reflect the specialization of services, and to add new categories such as

grants or historical marker programs. Other suggestions included asking about non-field service activities, and finally, deliberately archiving the changes made to the survey over time to track changes in the field.

Session 3: FSA Goals Reconsidered

Goal I: To maintain and further develop forum to share information and promote collegiality among the field services professional and other interested colleagues.

Chair: Connie Rendfeld

Committee: Karla Nicholson, Carol Harsh, J.D Britton, Tim Glines, Tom McKay, Melissa Davis

The basic intent of this goal is to strengthen our ability to deliver service and, to strengthen and develop field services in additional states and regions. Members agreed to maintain this goal, and that the strategy of gathering information about field services is an essential first step. The committee will begin with an “environmental scan” of interest and efforts in field services, and follow that up with a survey.

Goal II: To strengthen the field services/AASLH collaboration

Chair: Pat Miller

Committee: Harry Klinkhamer, Katherine Dill, John Harris

The purpose of this goal is to use AASLH resources to recognize and publicize FSA work. Several strategies toward this end have been accomplished and/or are ongoing, such as the FSA sessions at AASLH conferences, and FSA members appointed to AASLH committees. A suggestion for further strengthening this collaboration was to include a write-in column about field services in the AASLH publication Dispatch. The committee will set up a structure for the submission and publication process of this column, and continue to propose sessions for the AASLH conference.

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

Chair: David Grabitske

Committee: Tom McKay, Chuck Backus, Karla Nicholson

The purpose of this goal is to develop resources for field service providers. Investigation of creating a web-based manual containing core field service practices yielded the conclusion not to pursue it as originally conceived. Instead, the members proposed beginning a record to document expertise held by FSA members based on meeting sessions that present knowledge, theory and practice of field services. The committee will develop content for the annual FSA meetings.

Goal IV: To develop access to materials, workshops, programs, and other resources which help field service professionals do their work.

Chair: Carol Harsh

Committee: Katherine Dill, Harry Klinkhamer, J.D. Britton, Melissa Davis

The purpose of this goal is to provide access to technical resources for field service providers and field service consumers. The encompassing strategy of this goal is to create a web-based clearinghouse of resources available to everyone. AASLH once drafted a grant proposal based on a similar idea. The committee’s short-term goal is to review that proposal in consideration of applying for IMLS funding for the project, and to bring a recommendation to the FSA annual meeting in September.

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

The initial intent of this goal was to enable contact, communication among field service providers, and to have a web presence. These goals have been reached. McKay moved to drop Goal V and appoint a web master. Davis seconded. The motion passed, and the Rendfeld appointed John Harris as Electronic Communications Coordinator.

Session 4: AASLH Activities and Workshops

Terry Davis reported on the advocacy initiatives she staffs at AASLH. The “Taking Care of All Our History” presents an argument from the history side of museums for requesting \$100 million for IMLS to set aside for redistribution through states. Exploratory discussions begin this spring to address issues involved. Partner agencies in this initiative will launch grassroots advocacy for this legislation. The archives groups are on board, but AAM support is pending. Moreover, AASLH is exploring advocacy training for grassroots organizations with a goal of helping them achieve a greater role in local decision-making.

Davis also reported on the AASLH census project, for which a congressional earmark is being sought in 2005 or 2006. The project is a three-year pilot employing 2.5 people and four states, TN, TX, WV, and MA, to create a sustainable database of public history organizations. AASLH is approaching house and senate subcommittees for an earmark through the IMLS with Health and Human Services money. The definition of public history organization has been vetted and Davis will post it on the FSA listserv for comment.

Karla Nicholson reported on the AASLH Graduated Standards Program initiative. The rationale is that many organizations are looking for higher standards but existing ones seem largely out of reach. A Standards committee is looking at ways to complement accreditation and MAP, and at stand alone assessments tools for good, better, or best practices. A Task Force headed by Nina Zannieri to develop a plan over 2004 and submit a grant to IMLS in March of 2005.

Nicholson also reported that the Seminar for Historical Administration (formally hosted by Colonial Williamsburg) will now be hosted by the Indiana Historical Society. John Harris is the logistics coordinator, and Nicholson is marketing the program. Minority scholarships are available.

Nicholson then reported on ideas for a comprehensive professional development program from AASLH to complement what states may already be doing, to provide opportunities beyond the basic training of the current workshops, and the development of new topics that AASLH could bring to a state in any given year. A discussion opened in which Britton raised the issue of cost to workshop participants. AASLH is open to options for lowering the costs or providing a range of programs, and emphasizes the possibility of local partnerships to get more people the training they need. Harsh suggested a workshop bureau based on

“economy of means” kinds of programs. AASLH is launching an online workshop is Basic Archives this fall. Meanwhile, 2005 workshops are still under consideration.

Session 6: Coalition for Small Museums

Pat Miller reported on a Coalition meeting last September at which Miller, Rendfeld and Nicholson were present. Miller reported that while the issues of small museums are of interest to large, national organizations, the encounter lacked a focus on delivery service to the “little guys,” their understanding of small museums is not comprehensive, and the traditional definition of small museums not descriptive.

The SMA submitted a grant to IMLS on behalf of the coalition for service delivery pilot projects in Maryland, Illinois, and New England. Word comes down in September. The Coalition will meet again in May at the AAM conference.

FSA members recommended that FSA:

- Encourage the Coalition to meet in Nashville at AASLH’s invitation & see small museums while here
- Work toward goal of an FSO in each state
- Work toward a goal of regional FSOs for those states already having an FSO
- Provide advocacy training
- Focus on truly small history organizations
- Base FSOs on SHPO model with regrants becoming a core service

John Harris offered a definition of an FSO to include:

- Training to its constituency,
- Regrants to its constituency,
- And consultations with its constituency.

The Goal III committee will define Field Services and provide it to the Coalition before its next meeting.

Session 5: FSA Goals Reconsidered (Continued)

Rendfeld opened a discussion of FSA membership issues by reporting current membership statistics. Of organizational members 20 are historical societies, 10 are museums, 6 are museum associations, 9 are national, 15 are other (Humanities, archives, etc.), and there are 15 interested colleagues. Members agreed to use the census to gather information, and to make and sustain contact with potential new FSA members. The overall strategies for increasing and activating membership are:

- Create an approach for ongoing communication with potential members;
- Provide a strong, content heavy program at the 2004 Annual Meeting;
- Get folks on listserv and FSA committees;
- Push the connection to AASLH and focus on folks near the annual meeting;
- Conduct regional follow-up after the census according to the following:

New England:	Tom McKay
Mt. Plains:	Pat Miller, Katherine Dill
Mid Atlantic & Midwest:	J.D. Britton
Southeast & West:	Harry Klinkhamer, Karla Nicholson, Melissa Davis
Midwest:	John Harris
Canada & Alaska:	Chuck Backus

FSA 2005 Winter Retreat

Glines and Grabitske offered to host the 2005 FSA winter retreat in Minneapolis next February. Possible dates and hotel information will be forthcoming.

Concluding Session: Today's Challenges & Wrap-Up

Pat Miller raised the issue of the threat posed to museums from government cutbacks, and considered the need for advocacy training and encouragement of museums to pay greater attention to local government support. Glines added that in Minnesota, museums with county support suffer because state cutbacks tighten county budgets. Members agreed that in addition to continuing to make a better case for the purpose of history, that it is essential that we encourage museums to broaden their base of support.

Goal Committee Reports

Goal I:

The committee will complete an environmental scan of state museum associations, state history administrators, and humanities councils by the 30 April 2004, and establish a list of new contacts. The survey will be sent to new contacts and FSA listserv in May 2004. Committee will follow up the survey as necessary according by region.

Goal II:

Committee will oversee the development of "Ask Me Anything," quarterly answers in Dispatch from FSA members to questions from the field. The column will have an FSA tag and an author byline.

The committee also proposed a session at the ASLH conference on "Diversifying Funding Sources."

Goal III:

The committee will hammer out definitions of Field Services and Field Service Alliance, and develop content for FSA annual/winter meetings related to theory, method and practices.

Goal IV:

The committee will review the AASLH proposal for a project similar in intent to the clearinghouse idea, and follow up with a conference call to discuss the project and possibilities for developing the project. The committee will make recommendations for this goal at the 2004 FSA annual meeting.