

AASLH Annual Meeting Call for Session Proposals

Proposals Due: December 7, 2015

Location: Detroit, MI

Meeting Dates: September 14-17, 2016

Dear Colleagues:

The American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) will present its 2015 annual meeting in Louisville, KY, from September 16-20.

The Theme: *The Spirit of Rebirth*

Detroit's story is one of persistence and evolution. In the 1700s, it was a strategic outpost, bringing together Native American traders and European explorers. In 1805, its first settlement was destroyed by fire, only to be rebuilt stronger than before—its resurgence celebrated in the contemporary landmark, The Spirit of Detroit. Before the Civil War, Detroit served as a terminus on the Underground Railroad, until the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 transformed it into an international gateway to freedom. In the twentieth century, hundreds of thousands of Americans flocked to the region as part of the Great Migration, and to participate in its industrial expansion. Detroit's impact on American society and global history is underscored by its simultaneous identities as the Arsenal of Democracy, the birthplace of Motown, and the hub of the U.S. automobile industry. Throughout its complex history, the face of Detroit transformed repeatedly as a mosaic of immigrating ethnic groups and nationalities redefined its citizenry.

Today, Detroit presents a model of post-industrialization in the United States. In the footnotes of its sweeping narrative lie twentieth-century subplots of economic disparity, racial disharmony, and political dysfunction. Overcoming these currents and forging a new course forced its citizens to negotiate the competing interests of the city's past to reimagine a bold future. In doing so, the region is once again crafting a new identity.

Detroit's story reflects our own. Collectively and individually, we are constantly evolving, embracing new opportunities, and reacting to forces beyond our control. Navigating these contemporary challenges, while facing an unpredictable future, requires periodically re-thinking our direction. In doing so, we rely on the past for context, examples, and inspiration. The role of a public historian is especially critical during times of transition.

Meanwhile, we must anticipate changes within our profession. The shifting demographics of our audiences and our offices; the increasing pressure on our finances and partnering organizations; and questions about the relevance of our work in a nation beset by discordant political dialogue all require self-reflection. We need to review the assumptions that have served us to this point, question old processes, and ponder outdated interpretations.

In the spirit of this theme, the Program Committee seeks proposals that:

- Explore challenges faced by history professionals, including but not limited to: shifts in national and local demographics, economic downturn, financial pressures, and distracted audiences.
- Illustrate attempts – both successful and less than successful – to react to those contextual changes
- Illustrate attempts – both successful and less than successful – to proactively address pending contextual changes

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- Demonstrate the value of understanding the past (societal, institutional, programmatic) in choosing a course for the future
- Consider the use and value of public history in modern national discourse
- Document innovative models, approaches, partnerships
- Assess honestly and critically the failure of outdated models; suggests new approaches to common problems; and/or affirms the effectiveness of traditional tactics

In crafting your proposal, consider what your colleagues can learn from you, your institution, and others as you strive to:

1. Foster financial and organizational sustainability
2. Engage audiences
3. Address the needs of partners, constituents, and stakeholders
4. Evaluate and quantify organizational impact
5. Underscore the relevance of historical awareness in a democratic society

Requirements

Each session must have an organizer responsible for finding other speakers and coordinating logistics. All organizers must be affiliated with an institutional member or be an AASLH individual member. Topics for sessions should fall into at least one of the categories listed on page one of the Proposal Form. **Proposals must be submitted on a Call for Proposals form through AASLH's online submission system.** [To access the form, click here.](#) For more information, visit the AASLH website, www.aaslh.org, or contact Bethany Hawkins at Hawkins@aaslh.org or by phone at 615-320-3203.

If you've got ideas but you're not up for submitting a formal proposal, don't despair! The 2016 session will include times for less formal presentations and discussions in an "UNconference" format. Pop-Up Sessions will allow you to submit topics on the fly for roundtable discussions while in Detroit. Finally, need an idea for a session proposal, you will find a list on the AASLH website at <http://about.aaslh.org/conference/>.

Sincerely,

David Janssen
2016 Annual Meeting Program Chair
Executive Director, Brucemore

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- 1) **Select a Topic:** AASLH is the largest national organization dedicated solely to history museum leadership and management. The AASLH annual meeting is a rare opportunity for professionals from around the country to discuss individual perspectives on common issues. In proposing a topic to present at the meeting, consider: the relevance of the topic to broader issues facing the history museum community; the available data, evidence, documented impact, and illustrative information on the topic; and the potential for the topic to inform discussions and generate vigorous dialogue among colleagues.
- 2) **Choose a Format:** Sessions at the AASLH annual meeting are held in three different formats:
 1. **Discussion Sessions** are typically 75-minutes long and focused less on presenters than on the participants themselves. Some specific formats include (but are not limited to):
 - **Roundtables** consider a specific issue in an informal group discussion led by one or two session leaders (including the organizer). Discussion leaders should use effective techniques to stimulate maximum group participation. Roundtables are normally 75 minutes.
 - **Conversation Starter sessions** focus heavily on participatory discussions. The moderator poses a predetermined question/situation/challenge and invites attendees to participate. Moderator monitors discussion to keep on track as a guide on the side, not a sage on the stage.
 - **Current Issues Forums** is intended to discuss a current issue. One or two panelists provide remarks about its implications for historical organizations, and session attendees identify one or more questions that the field should address. Small groups then work to identify solutions or strategies to solve the problem and make a report to the full group.
 2. **Panels** examine historical or professional problems/issues and includes one chair (who may serve as a speaker) and up to three panelists. They are not merely show-and-tell, but should provide takeaways for attendees. Panelists often provide contrasting perspectives and represent varied institutions (i.e. budget, mission, location, etc.). Panels are typically 75-minutes long and presenters should allow ample time for questions and answers.
 3. **Longform Sessions.** These sessions are longer than Discussion and Panel sessions and occur in half- or full-day segments on Wednesday or Saturday of the meeting.
 - A **Workshop** teaches special skills in a small group setting. Workshops include appropriate printed materials. Proposals should specify the particular skills the workshop will teach, as well as the methods and techniques instructors will use. Participants in workshop sessions pay fees which contribute to the conference budget and presenters and panelists all contribute their presentations in-kind.
 - A **Lab** is an informal, hands-on educational experience that usually occurs off-site at a historic site or setting. It lasts approximately two to three hours including time for transportation. A nominal fee is charged for each lab to cover transportation costs to and from the site.

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4. **Select Presenters:** AASLH requires that you, as the person submitting the session, serve as the session organizer responsible for logistics, requests for materials and equipment, communication with participants and AASLH staff, and leading the session itself. *Session chairs must be affiliated with an AASLH institutional member or hold an individual membership.* Most sessions include three presenters: a chairperson plus two presenters. (If more than two presenters are listed, the program committee may accept the session but will remove presenters as it deems appropriate.) In order to involve as many people as possible in the meeting, no one can participate in more than two sessions.
5. Session proposals must specifically highlight central issues the proposal addresses and their significance to the field of state and local history and clearly articulate the main points the proposed session will address.
6. **Complete the Session Proposal Form online:**
 - o [Submit all session proposals here.](#)
 - o [Download a hard copy of the form here.](#)
7. **Submit your Proposal:** Submit your proposal online by December 7. Session chairs will be notified of their proposal's status by February 27, 2016.
8. **Registration Fees & Cost:** Organizers and presenters must register for at least one day of the annual meeting. Speakers are encouraged to take advantage of their attendance and register for the full meeting. Discounts are not given for meeting registration. AASLH does not pay travel costs or honoraria for any session chairs or presenters. Session chairs are responsible for making sure that all presenters register for the annual meeting.
9. **Scheduled Sessions:** AASLH planning staff will assign all session times and dates. Submission of a proposal indicates your willingness to accept the schedule as assigned. You may submit a request for a specific date or time; however we cannot guarantee that we can honor all requests.