

AASLH

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HISTORYNEWS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR STATE AND LOCAL HISTORY

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Contents

WINTER 2018 VOLUME 73, #1



ON THE COVER
This wordle is created from some of the key words and phrases that guest editor Hope Shannon identified as important to the discussion within this issue.

INSIDE: TECHNICAL LEAFLET

Get to Work: Crafting Cover Letters and Résumés for Emerging Professionals

By Michael Dove and Krista McCracken



Departments

3 On Doing Local History

By Hope Shannon with Carol Kammen

5 The Whole is Greater

By AASLH Diversity and Inclusion Task Force

34 Book Reviews

By Hannah Hethmon and Ty Pierce

37 AASLH News



Features

7 Investing in the Ecosystem

By Amanda L. Higgins and Patrick A. Lewis

12 Emerging Labor: Work and the New Public Historic Historian

By Jess Lamar Reece Holler

16 Talking about Slavery When Your Museum Wants to Avoid It

By Cait Johnson

22 Hungry for History: Bringing Social Studies Back to Alabama

By Caroline Gibbons

29 "Do You Have Anything in Your Museum about Me?"

By Breann Velasco



History News is a publication of the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH). *History News* exists to foster publication, scholarly research, and an open forum for discussion of best practices, applicable theories, and professional experiences pertinent to the field of state and local history.

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Welcome to the first-ever takeover of *History News*! While we accept articles from anyone regardless of career stage, this is the first issue written and edited entirely by those who identify themselves as Emerging History Professionals.

We are grateful for the work that guest editors Hope Shannon and Hannah Hethmon put into this edition of *History News*. They were the ideal people to lead this effort. Hannah was the AASLH staffer who founded the Emerging History Professionals affinity community and Hope was its first chair.

The insight and thought that Hope, Hannah, and these authors bring to their work and our profession reflects people doing relevant, inspired history. You will see from the articles within that the field is in very good hands as the next generation asserts itself in even greater leadership roles in public history.

Many history professionals—whether emerging, emerged, or at another career stage—will no doubt benefit from Michael Dove and Krista McCracken's

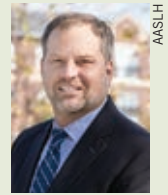
Technical Leaflet, "Get to Work: Crafting Cover Letters and Résumés for Emerging Professionals." Having only recently discovered the wonderful world of podcasts, I was particularly pleased to see Hannah's review of one of my favorites: *Museum People*. You are sure to find your own personal favorite(s) as well.

No matter what career stage a person is in, I believe we should grant all of our peers the moniker of "professional" if they take their work as assiduously as these writers and their compatriots do—submitting articles, presenting at conferences, and doing terrific work in communities across the nation.

This issue of *History News*, conceived, written, and edited entirely by Emerging History Professionals, proves my point. Well done, fellow history professionals. By any standard or measure, you have emerged!



Bob Beatty

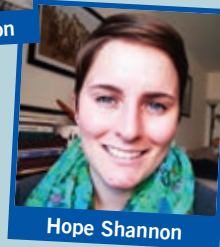


The Winter 2018 issue of *History News* is the result of a vision Bob Beatty had last year for a special takeover or "hack" of AASLH's long-running magazine. His idea was to hand *History News* over to the field's newest practitioners—sometimes called "emerging" professionals—to produce an issue that centers around their perspectives and showcases their thoughts on problems and trends in the field. Emerging professionals include anyone in the early stages of a public history career, from students and new professionals to hobbyists, and their knowledge and insight bring new life to our ever-changing discipline. Bob asked us to lead the project and co-edit the special issue, and we're pleased to share with you the culmination of these efforts.

From the start, we knew that there had to be a shift in process, not just content, to maximize the impact and success of a *History News* written almost entirely by emerging professionals. Our primary goal was to produce an issue that highlights their perspectives, but we also wanted to provide a learning experience for everyone who submitted an abstract. For many applicants, submitting proposals for this issue of *History News* was their first attempt at publication. We provided extensive feedback for the submissions we had to decline and are hopeful that these comments will help applicants prepare for future opportunities.



Hannah Hethmon



Hope Shannon

The articles we ultimately included in this issue reflect how Emerging History Professionals are thinking critically about the field and its sustainability. The authors aren't afraid to tackle difficult history or push back against practices they believe are unethical or harmful. Jess Lamar Reece Holler addresses pressing labor concerns facing public historians, while Amanda L. Higgins and Patrick A. Lewis consider the role partnerships can play in preparing history Ph.D.s for careers in public history. Cait Johnson, Caroline Gibbons, and Breann Velasco offer their takes on changes and tough conversations happening at their institutions, which should provide insight for readers facing similar problems in their own practice. The columns from Hope Shannon and AASLH's Diversity and Inclusion Task Force, the reviews by Hannah Hethmon and Ty Pierce, and the Technical Leaflet by Michael Dove and Krista McCracken

complete this special issue of *History News*.

We want to thank Bob Beatty and AASLH for inviting us to co-edit the first-ever "hack" of *History News*, our contributing authors for sharing their experiences and insights, and Carol Kammen for allowing us to take over her "On Doing Local History" column. We hope our collective effort opens doors for the next generation of public historians and provides a model for how other associations and organizations can better support early career professionals.



Hannah Hethmon



Hope Shannon

Local Historians, Politics, and the Public Good

The political discourse swirling around the 2016 presidential election elicited a groundswell of grassroots activism across the United States. As I watched these events unfold, I wondered what role local history and local historians played in all of this. Our day-to-day lived experiences are heavily influenced by the local policies and environments in which we live and work, and these places are often the frontline for battles over issues of both personal and broader significance. What's curious is we don't often see local historians taking part in these conversations, even though local activists, politicians, and other change-makers invoke local history in debates about everything from sanctuary cities to municipal ordinances. There *are* local historians doing this work, certainly, but many more are not visibly engaged in these conversations.

This led me to wonder about the intersections between local history and the political. What is the relationship between the two? What spaces do local history and the local historian occupy in discussions about political matters and the public good?

Carol Kammen and I explored these questions together. Carol welcomed me to her long-running column and allowed me to flip the script, so to speak, for this edition of "On Doing Local History." We focused on two big intersections between local history and politics: the place of political narratives in local history and local history's role in debates about public life in the present. We discussed how these relationships have changed over time, what this means for local historians practicing today, and how local historians can engage with political issues in their communities.

In the interest of building local histories that support the status quo or build love of place, local historians have, historically, tended to avoid or skirt around political topics that provoke divisiveness. "There is an originalist narrative created in local history that is apolitical," Carol says. "The founders of a place and the way it was set up are celebrated in a way that leaves out diversity and controversy.

The history comes out of a need to keep people there." This makes it difficult for anyone to controvert the established narrative. "The conventions of local history, it seems to me, are to make people understand the past but feel good about place."¹

By focusing on place, local historians have often neglected to consider in any complex way the past's political issues. "Local historians will rarely talk about a political election. They will rarely talk

When I started doing local history, I was disturbed by the people who weren't there.

about a strike or unions. When I started doing local history, I was disturbed by the people who weren't there. My interest was in the people. Over time, local history has changed, responding to academic trends, but it is still promotional of place," Carol explains. "We don't tend to look at inequality. Yet, we can certainly look back and see inequalities in our communities."

Additionally, local historians are seldom political about the important role local history can and does play in their neighborhoods and communities. By political, we mean they do not fight for the resources they need to amplify their work or to demonstrate the local and national relevance of the history they study. Local history is typically not well-funded and is generally not considered to be part of the panacea of essential civic services, like schools, police and fire stations, and other municipally funded agencies. We are not, Carol argues, "presenting local history to the community in a way that makes a statement about how important local history is. We should be advocating for the value of what we do."

Why is this? The passion is certainly there. Local historians are consummate researchers who study and write about everything from streetcars to local fam-

ilies to recreation. They share their findings in books, public programs, and walking tours, often in partnership with local historical societies and libraries. And yet, this does not yield any kind of sustained support from funding agencies or the majority of residents in any particular area. Broader interest in local history resurges from time to time in response to historical anniversaries or commemorations—the United States Bicentennial is a good example of this phenomenon—but widespread public support rarely lasts.

For local historians, part of the issue with advocating for the importance of local history and building broad public understanding of its relevance is how to involve others in local history work. Audiences rarely join in the creation of historical knowledge and often do not share a comparable level of investment in the material or its message. Carol provides a comparison to exemplify this point. "This is a big difference between local historical societies and preservation societies. In order to save that building or do something, the preservationists enlist people to support them and work with them, and they give those people real jobs. They put hammers in the hands of their supporters, and they march in the streets and appear at public meetings. That's a lesson historical societies and local historians need to learn. Local history has not given its public much of a purpose. But preservationists try to give others a stake. Even if their supporters lose a building, they begin to look at their communities with new eyes. We need more of this in local history. People become involved because they're discovering it themselves. They're learning about it by doing."

This is not to say that no local historians do this work. Many incorporate complex issues from the past into their local histories, fight for resources and visibility, and put their knowledge to work in contemporary conversations about local, regional, and even national problems. This results from decades of hard work, introspection, and, in the case of struggling local historical societies, attempts to reinvent their

On Doing Local History >

organizations to make sure they remain relevant and stable far into the future.

For example, the Cambridge (MA) Historical Society held a symposium in fall 2016 called “Housing for All,” where a panel of discussants considered concerns related to local housing through a historical lens. The panel invited audience comment, and attendees were encouraged to contribute their own housing stories.

The Nashville Public Library opened its Civil Rights Room to serve a similar purpose. The space hosts a collection and exhibition dedicated to civil rights history in Nashville, Tennessee, as well as programs designed to build connections between the history of the Civil Rights Movement and related struggles facing Nashville residents in the present.²

These examples help to illuminate the paths we need to take to make clear the connections between past and present, serve the public in a meaningful way, and demonstrate the relevance of our discipline. Building these foundations

provides opportunities for local historians to bring the past into conversations about problems we’re grappling with today. We’re on the right path, but there is still much work to be done.

We need to continue the work of complicating local history narratives. “Local history and local historians have tended to paint the past as issue-free,” Carol argues. “It all relates to what we’re doing today. All history picks up its questions from current issues.” We need to look beyond the importance of place to the core issues underlying local spaces, both today and in the past. In understanding and resolving today’s problems, she posits, “local history has a really important part to play.” The issues have deep historical roots, but just how deep has only recently begun to emerge in local narratives.

We also need to use local history to build bridges between diverse communities. Many local historians work through local historical societies, which have, historically, been associated with white audiences. It has only been in the past half-century that histories of women, people of color, LGBTQ people, and

other underrepresented groups have been seriously considered in academic settings, and even more recently in narratives produced at the local level. But local history has happened beyond these boundaries for millennia. Having a sense of one’s own past and place in history is a uniquely human experience that we all share. We should use local history to create spaces where people can come together and, as Carol says, “reflect on a complex past.”

Connecting past to present is an essential component of practicing history. It’s not just about researching and writing about stories from the past. It’s about sharing the experience of being a historian in a way that builds appreciation for the historian’s craft, invites others in, and makes this important work more visible and accessible. Ultimately, Carol reports, “local history can have a very positive effect on social justice and change. Local history has a role to play in how a place learns to do differently. And we’re moving in this direction. But it’s a case we need to make where people see it as part of their contribution. Some do, but more do not. The most they would say is that they are community boosters. Or they provide information for the community. This is a real problem.” We need to be on the frontlines of today’s debates, and we need to advocate for our work, for each other, and for the public we serve. ●



Hope Shannon is a public history professional and historian. She has designed and led a wide array of projects and initiatives

with community partners engaged in cultural work on the local level. Hope is also a former Executive Director at the South End Historical Society in Boston, where she wrote *Legendary Locals of Boston’s South End*. Email her at hopejshannon@gmail.com or reach out to her on Twitter @HistorianHope.



“On Doing Local History” is intended to encourage dialogue on the essential issues of local history. Carol Kammen can be reached at

cckk6@cornell.edu.

¹ All quotes derive from discussions via phone and email between Hope Shannon and Carol Kammen in July and August 2017.

² See Heidi Legg and Marieke Van Damme, “If You Are Slowly Improving Citizens, You Get a Better City,” *History News* 72, no. 4, and Laura Caldwell Anderson, “Sharing Nashville’s Civil Rights Past with the Police,” *History News*, 71, no. 3.

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Ready to Listen, Speak, and Act: The AASLH Diversity and Inclusion Task Force

In 2018, are we really diverse and inclusive in the fields of arts and humanities? The answer is NO! The recent social unrest of mass demonstrations by white supremacist groups in Charlottesville, Virginia; the end of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA); and the degrading language used by President Donald Trump to belittle the protest of police brutality toward African Americans initiated by National Football League player Colin Kaepernick has compelled arts and humanities organizations and institutions to respond to the issue of race, inclusion, and equality and to not remain silent.

A 2015 self-examination of the AASLH Council revealed that the organization needed to be more diverse and inclusive. It formed the AASLH Diversity and Inclusion Task Force to ensure that AASLH advocates and practices the acceptance of *all* voices and views, representing a diverse range of race, ethnicity, culture, disabilities, gender identity, and sexual orientation through its programs, activities, and membership. The task force mission statement is: “Everyone makes history. Relevant history is inclusive history. So, we are investing in forward-thinking scholarship, expanding the diversity of our field, and choosing partners who make equity a priority.”



The Diversity and Inclusion Task Force hosted a successful mixer at the 2017 AASLH Annual Meeting in Austin.



Photos: Marian Carpenter, American Association for State and Local History

The AASLH Diversity and Inclusion Task Force serves as an advisor to the AASLH Council and staff. It also sponsors programs and activities for AASLH members and professionals in the arts and humanities. In 2017, the task force proposed a new vision that included more collaboration and diverse

viewpoints and cultures. The task force increased its membership to ten in order to invite the participation of new and non-AASLH members.

At the AASLH 2017 Annual Meeting in Austin, Texas, which had the theme *I AM History*, the task force sponsored “The State of Inclusion” session in



THE AASLH DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION TASK FORCE

- Marian Carpenter (*chair*) The Ringling Museum of Art (2016-2018)
- Omar Eaton-Martínez National Museum of American History (2016-2018)
- Enimini Ekong Brown v. Board of Education National Heritage Site (2017-2018)
- Veronica Gallardo Fort Monroe Authority (2016-2018)
- Amanda Jasso Austin Public Library (2017-2018)
- Richard Josey Minnesota Historical Society (2017-2018)
- Mónica Moncada Independent Professional (2016-2018)
- Julia Rose Homewood Museum (2016-2018)
- Kimberly Springle Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives (2017-2018)
- Chris Taylor Minnesota Historical Society (2016-2018)
- Tobi Voigt Michigan History Center (2016-2018)

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2016-2018**



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John Fleming, Vice Chair; National Museum of African American Music
Julie Rose, Immediate Past Chair; Homewood Museum
Norman Burns, II, Treasurer; Conner Prairie
Linnea Grim, Secretary; Thomas Jefferson's Monticello
Erin Carlson Mast, Council's Representative; President Lincoln's Cottage

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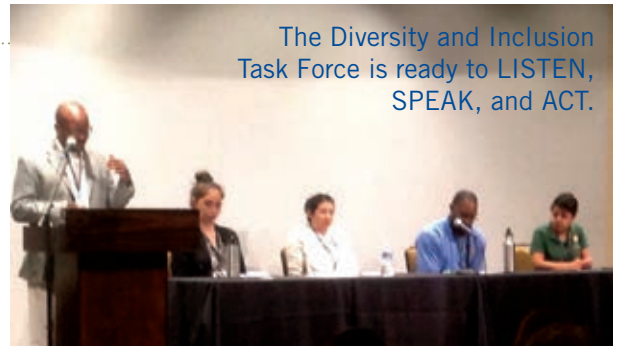
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Jennifer Kilmer, Class of 2019; Washington State Historical Society
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Nicola Longford, Class of 2018; The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza
Kyle McCoy, Class of 2020; Mercer Museum and Fonthill Castle
Brent Ott, Class of 2021; The Henry Ford
Sarah Pharaon, Class of 2019; International Coalition of Sites of Conscience
Trina Nelson Thomas, Class of 2021; Stark Art & History Venues
Scott Wands, Class of 2020; Connecticut Humanities

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partnership with the American Library Association and the Society of American Archivists for the Committee on Archives, Libraries, and Museums. The discussion encouraged conference attendees to examine the practice of diversity and inclusion in the areas of employment, policies and procedures, and programs/activities. The panelists and session moderator shared personal stories and engaged the audience in direct conversation about the status of inclusion in the arts and humanities. The number of questions and comments from panelists and attendees energized the conversation. It also confirmed that in 2017 the field is still not diverse and inclusive enough. The AASLH Diversity and Inclusion Task Force also hosted its first mixer at the annual meeting, which attracted many first-time AASLH members and conference attendees. The task force received feedback requesting more social events to encourage interaction and networking among people of color and other underrepresented groups.



The Diversity and Inclusion Task Force is ready to LISTEN, SPEAK, and ACT.

For 2018, the Diversity and Inclusion Task Force is ready to LISTEN, SPEAK, and ACT. The task force will have an even greater presence at the 2018 AASLH Annual Meeting in Kansas City. In connection with the theme, *Truth or Consequences*, it will host several conference activities that will offer more training and resources on how to practice inclusion, as well as organize more social events. Community collaboration and participation will be a new initiative for the task force to introduce AASLH to a wider audience and to help preserve the history of all people. ☉

To learn more about the AASLH Diversity and Inclusion Task Force, contact chair Mari Carpenter at Marian.Carpenter@ringling.org or Natalie Flammia, AASLH staff liaison to the task force at flammia@aslh.org.

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Investing IN THE ECOSYSTEM

Kentucky Historical Society

A Kentucky Journey, the Kentucky Historical Society's signature exhibit, invites visitors to explore 12,000 years of the state's history. It is located inside the Kentucky Historical Society headquarters in downtown Frankfort, KY.



BY
**AMANDA L. HIGGINS
AND
PATRICK A. LEWIS**



Kentucky Historical Society

The Kentucky Historical Society is hosting a series of programs based on the temporary exhibit *Photographing Freetowns: African American Kentucky through the Lens of Helen Balfour Morrison, 1935-1946*. This adaptation of the Chicago Newberry Library's exhibit documents African American life in Depression-era Kentucky.

The academic job market, particularly in the humanities, has been in crisis for nearly five decades. The overproduction of doctoral degrees, shifting funding priorities, and a growing reliance on contingent or part-time instructors has dramatically reshaped the higher education landscape. The jobs crisis has also produced a genre of academic writing known as “Quit Lit,” in which academics on and off of the tenure track write think pieces explaining their decision to leave academia. Quit Lit contains some consistent tropes: the exploitative power of the neoliberal academy, administrative burdens associated with teaching in the academy, and the consistent call to leave that world behind for better opportunities elsewhere.¹

In a recent Quit Lit article for *Inside Higher Ed*, Claire Potter, a tenured professor of history at the New School, suggested, “No one should work as an adjunct,” and called on graduate departments to track non-academic employment. Potter’s article received swift and accurate blowback for her glib suggestion that adjuncts quit teaching and, germane to this issue of *History News*, her presumption that humanities-trained Ph.D.s could seamlessly move from academic training to “alt-ac” or non-academic jobs.²

Potter and other Quit Lit writers often suggest that history Ph.D.s can solve the academic jobs crisis by simply applying for and gaining positions in public history, museums, archives, and libraries—as though those careers have no field-specific training or job experience required. While it may not be obvious to well-meaning tenured and

tenure-track faculty in history departments around the country, public historians know that most Ph.D. programs are neither equipped nor interested in helping students cultivate the variety of skills and experiences necessary in finding a fulfilling career outside of academia. While learning to read, write, research, and analyze are foundational and imperative skills, being successful public historians requires communication, constituent management, long-range institutional planning, exhibit design, curatorial, and development skills.

The problem is systemic, while the solutions proposed by both academic and public history commentators and program administrators are individualistic. Get skills. Make connections. Move across the country. Get hired. Don't become a statistic. Look for happiness in a few years. Unwilling or unable to do any of that? Good luck!

These individualistic solutions come from a position of powerlessness on the part of academic advisors of graduate students. They aren't employers. They aren't hiring. They react to the market offered by practicing public history professionals. Academic advisors have been trying—with varying levels of success—to make better job candidates. Why don't we emerging professionals who find ourselves in positions of increasing influence at our organizations make a better market?

As the professionals who began careers after the recession become managers and leaders, we need to open more doors for people like us. One of the greatest weaknesses of public history career advice literature is the assumption that our

paths are replicable. This is not necessarily so; we depend on circumstance and seizing opportunity.

We must both create the opportunity and make sure we reach outside of our organizations to develop emerging professionals who can capitalize on it. These are people whose energy and creativity expand the mission of our history organizations into driving meaningful social change, people who find new audiences for our organizations' work, people who have learned to be financially nimble in the era of austerity instead of the current leadership that in many ways still reels from the loss of the largesse of the 1990s.

Hiring good people isn't just about creating positions within your organization. It's about developing cooperative ecosystems that build better candidates while they're still in graduate school. Working locally, you can build relationships that allow talented young people to attend regional universities and work with you. They come to the organization pre-invested in the mission of improving lives in their communities through history because they are from and of those communities. They give struggling regional history departments new energy and a corps of young alumni who are employed, productive, and ready to give back to their department in innumerable ways. Through their success, they prove to their departments that public history isn't a backup plan but a specialized career that demands skills over and above those taught by conventional academics.

The authors of this article got our respective breaks from a program designed to create better professional candidates. Now that we have converted that opportunity into careers, we are working to develop a better academic/public history ecosystem that develops talent for our organization, opens the path to long-term retention of that talent, and provides enviable, intangible benefits for emerging professionals who want to integrate their careers into their lives, not put one on hold for the other.

Before the American Historical Association and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation began funding “Career Diversity for Historians” grants, the Kentucky Historical Society (KHS) and the history department of the University of Kentucky developed the Graduate Editorial Assistantship. It was launched in 2010 to meet the needs of three principal parties: a public history institution, an academic department, and Ph.D. candidates soon to be on the job market. The position's salary is raised through private donations to the KHS Foundation, and benefits are paid and administered by the university. The position is based in academic editing and publishing, but involves the candidate in the much broader work of a well-rounded public history institution.³

The Graduate Editorial Assistant (GEA) serves as the book review editor for the *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, the journal of record for Kentucky history. Like other graduate assistantships at history journals, the GEA chooses books for review, cultivates relationships with reviewers, edits sub-

We chose to be here; to make change here; and to believe in our state, our place, and our abilities. The skills we gained, the opportunities we seized kept us doing what we love in the place that matters the most to us.

missions, and participates in editorial meetings with *Register* staff. What makes the position different from editorial assistantships at other journals is the publisher. The *Register* is published by the Kentucky Historical Society. *Register* staff work within the KHS functional team devoted to research and access. The team houses KHS's award-winning digital humanities project, the *Civil War Governors of Kentucky Digital Documentary Edition*, and the institution's research library. For twenty hours a week, the Graduate Editorial Assistant works as a peer on the KHS Research Experience team and has the opportunity to work throughout the institution to gain skills in archival processing, communications, exhibit research, and engagement. These opportunities are only possible because the GEA works in a dynamic public history institution that has reaped the benefits of motivated, skilled, and place-based Ph.D. students for seven years.

Since the position was established, five have completed their degrees. All of these GEAs are employed in public history or in tenure-track positions. The authors of this piece are former Graduate Editorial Assistants as well. Each of us leveraged the skills, experience, and contacts we acquired into supervisory positions at KHS. Both of us have found personally fulfilling and intellectually challenging work in communities that we care deeply about. We create change in our home state. We can show the impact of our work to our families and our hometowns. We are repaying the state's investment in us as its best and brightest.

Like any system, this partnership requires maintenance. Complacency, budget cuts, and staff turnover happen. Institutional memory gets lost. As its beneficiaries, we are committed to maintaining the effectiveness of the concept, articulating its value to current stakeholders, and advocating the expansion of this model to other places and institutional settings. The position was conceived as an act of practical pedagogy and service to the fields of public and academic history, not just as a self-serving way to fund another graduate student and perform editorial labor. There were and are easier, less expensive ways to have gotten the work done.

It is important to note that this is not an internship or an assistantship. When, on occasion, administrators on both sides of the relationship have slipped into calling the position this, those closest to it have pushed back forcefully. Appropriate language is very important for how Graduate

Editorial Assistants conduct themselves and how aggressively they make the position work for their career. An intern has expectations set for them. Emerging professionals hustle, network, and position themselves for the next evolution in their careers. This language works as internal motivation for employees, but it also cues those around them into the purpose of the position. It encourages KHS managers to bring the GEA into important conversations with key collaborators not just as an observer but as a participant whose opinion is welcomed and valued.

While the position has placed all of its holders, it does not guarantee placement. Instead, it places ambitious and talented early career professionals into situations that expand their portfolios of marketable skills and their body of profes-

Kentucky Historical Society



Along with its headquarters building, the Kentucky Historical Society's history campus includes the Old State Capitol and the Kentucky Military History Museum in the State Arsenal.

sional contacts. But it depends on the talent of the individual to make the most of those opportunities at the time and when they are on the job market.

Maintaining excellence is not guaranteed. Much of what makes the idea work for KHS and the university involves the motivations of the students chosen for the position. If the Graduate Editorial Assistant only devotes the twenty hours required, only focuses on the book reviews, and/or only talks to colleagues on the *Register* staff, the position becomes another line on a CV. A lack of curiosity about public history and about KHS can make the position stale and the expe-

rience unfulfilling. So much of what has made the position work is an understanding of KHS and its role within the Commonwealth. Some of that understanding was implicit: four of the five GEAs are Kentuckians who felt deeply connected to the state and its history before they came to KHS. All five saw the value of a public history institution in developing their own careers and in fostering change.

Most importantly, the position has allowed talented Kentuckians to do excellent work on Kentucky in Kentucky. The power of the GEA position comes with keeping Kentuckians in the Commonwealth and providing them skills and training for fulfilling careers wherever they chose to make their lives. We chose to stay in Kentucky. We chose to be here; to make change here; and to believe in our state, our place, and our abilities. The skills we gained, the opportunities we seized kept us doing what we love in the place that matters the most to us.

This model may not work for your institution, but a program like it—one based on recruiting and retaining local or regional students—can help energize state and local history organizations, by reminding talented, local folks that fulfilling public history work is available to them at home. As young professionals, we're committed to continuing to invest in our ecosystem and encourage you to create and maintain your own. ©

A Kentuckian by birth and by choice, Amanda L. Higgins earned her Ph.D. in American history from the University of Kentucky in 2013. She joined the staff of the Kentucky Historical Society in 2015 as the Associate Editor of the *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* and is now KHS's Community Engagement Administrator. You can find her on Twitter (@Doc_Higgs) and working with communities throughout the Commonwealth to preserve and promote their histories.

Patrick A. Lewis (Twitter @KyPLewis) has been an NPS park ranger, teacher, editor, and digital humanist. After completing his Ph.D. at the University of Kentucky in 2012, Lewis joined the staff of the *Civil War Governors of Kentucky*, which he now directs. Through NEH and NHPRC funding, CWGK digitally publishes the voices of diverse Kentuckians who interacted with the state government during the Civil War era. He is author of *For Slavery and Union: Benjamin Buckner and Kentucky Loyalties in the Civil War* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2015).

¹ See "Historians Face Bleak Job Field," *Washington Post*, Dec. 31, 1974; "Fixing the Ph.D.," *New Yorker*, June 4, 2014; Kevin Gannon, "Fixing Our Job-Market Problem," *Chronicle Vitae*, July 24, 2017; Robert R. Weyeneth and Daniel J. Vivian, "Charting the Course: Challenges in Public History Education, Guidance for Developing Strong Public History Programs," *Public Historian* 30, no. 3 (August 2016): 25-49; Megan Garner, "The Rise of 'Quit Lit,'" *Atlantic*, September 10, 2015.

² Claire Potter, "Angry About Adjuncting?" *Inside Higher Ed*, October 15, 2017.

³ The American Historical Association and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation began their Career Diversity in History initiative in 2014. For more information, visit: www.historians.org/jobs-and-professional-development/career-diversity-for-historians/about-career-diversity.

...being successful public historians requires

communication, constituent management, long-range institutional planning, exhibit design, curatorial, and development skills.



The Kentucky Hall of Governors helps visitors go beyond rumors and myths to find the facts about Kentucky's governors and see Kentucky's history within the context of U.S. history. The official portraits of every Kentucky governor hang in this interactive gallery.

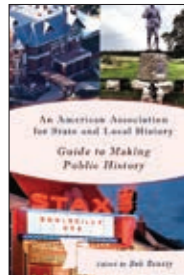
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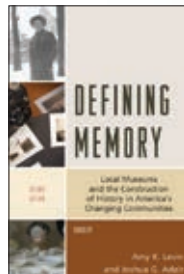
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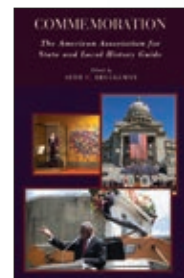
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Emerging Labor: WORK AND THE

NEW PUBLIC HISTORIAN

BY JESS LAMAR REECE HOLLER



Unhappily revenant, unamused as ever—labor is back in a big, familiar way. The past few years have seen the resurgence of a labor movement in the cultural and humanities sector that’s perhaps the first many Emerging History Professionals have participated in—from the flourishing of a union struggle for graduate workers in oafishly resistant private universities to the swift and charismatic union drive of StoryCorps.

Labor history has a proud role in the story of public history as a field and a practice, but what’s the history (and future) of labor, wages, and economic justice in our own field?

To find out, I asked Emerging History Professionals (EHPs). I put out a short survey to colleagues, comrades, and Twitter heroes asking, “What aren’t we talking about when we don’t talk about our labor?” and “What are some things other interested EHPs should know, heading into our field, as it exists today?” The responses, like this one from an EHP living and working in rural America, may be saddening, but they probably won’t surprise you:

“I would tell them to get used to driving beat-up cars and living in shitty apartments. Get used to not getting married or having kids in your twenties. Get used to working nights and weekends and ALL the time. Get

used to burnout and job applications and marathon conferences and bad bosses and deciding to not go to the doctor when you are sick so that you can pay rent this month.”

The responses made me excited; they made me cry. I witnessed so much I’d felt and been compelled *not* to share in the workplace. So many of us—especially people of color, women, and queer EHPs—feel that the field isn’t sustaining us. And worse, that labor culture in public history and allied culture work often makes impossible the radical, justice-seeking transformations many of us are here to bring.

How did we get here? Public history rose out of many of the same cultural moments that produced labor history: a turn toward socially inflected history and amplifying the voices of marginalized folks battling for rights under oppressive systems. Both movements pushed at the boundaries of mainstream academic history toward different sorts of solidarities, inclusions, and vistas of access. But somehow we’ve botched that legacy. Despite the number of museums, cultural centers, oral history projects, and documentaries devoted to the history of labor, it is often still taboo to talk about our own workplace culture. Public history workers, especially Emerging History Professionals, are wage laborers, too. Our labor is made all the more precarious because of the edict that we should (and mostly, do) love the work.

As most Emerging History Professionals today have heard, you aren’t in public history to make money. Most

have also likely encountered a culture of paying dues. Whether your professors, advisors, and early bosses like it, love it, or critique it with a subtle “but there’s nothing we can do,” chances are you’ve been told you, unfortunately, can’t be paid or can’t be paid enough for the work you do and the skills you bring.

Internships, in particular, have been debated hotly in the field, but the jury always seems to be hung. Expectations of unpaid and underpaid labor hobble Emerging History Professionals, who are often already saddled with undergraduate and graduate debt and make the field further inaccessible to those who weren’t born rich. But regardless of the odds, there’s always the same thin hope that your internship, volunteer gig, or history museum gift shop cash register job will someday magically transform into a position where your skills and degree are valued (as evidenced by a sustainable paycheck to match that meaningful labor). “Don’t give up, sweetie. Just keep doing a real good job.”

So what might an emerging labor movement look like for public history? How might Emerging History Professionals band together to help forge the sort of economic justice within our field that will enable us to do the work of social justice in public history and truly sustain diverse practitioners? At the National Council on Public History, the discussion on cultures of unpaid internships veered toward questions of job preparation for EHPs: how might faculty better prepare students to express their worth, connect skillsets to institutional needs, and negotiate future salaries? That’s well and good (more of this, please!), but no amount of negotiation skills can touch the fact that many institutions simply won’t pay or pay enough.

Some of the change *needs* to come from employers and institutions. Ask any EHP and the list of demands will be fairly simple: pay your interns; pay entry-level EHPs in accordance with the work they do; don’t take advantage of the precarious position of women, minority, first-generation, and low-income candidates who may not know how to or feel uncomfortable asking for more pay; provide benefits; and provide professional development opportunities and support EHPs when we find them for ourselves. Do we want a diverse, resilient new public history field able to take on and do the necessary, meaningful, and timely work of public history? Do we want this field to promote social justice capable of building radical, inclusive programs or to facilitate experiences that are as accessible as they sound? Then start by making this work accessible, sustainable, and possible for *us*. We eat, too. Or at least try to.

Institutional changes aren’t happening fast enough. As one EHP tells it, we’re burning out before our organizations can make it happen. She writes:

“I’m tired. The field needs to know that it is exhausting its young people. It is losing some of its best workers to the private sector because they are tired and can see the big picture and get out when it is the right time. I am just waiting for my chance to jump ship for a better job that provides me with good benefits, a sense of accomplishment, [and] a better work environment.”

Some of this change making also needs to come from us in the form of a new politics of refusal and new venues of imagination for where public history work can happen. There is privilege in refusal, too. But short of a union (and by all means, let’s make that happen), banding together and refusing positions that don’t pay or pay enough will help the field understand that our labor isn’t free. It’s hard to ask us to imagine solidarity when a culture of scarcity and fierce competition for jobs still rules graduate schools and professional culture. It’s hard to ask when many of us have friends and classmates and colleagues jostling in the same job pool and when so many EHPs know and feel our internship experiences, even *if* exploitative, have been critical for networking. But if we can start to think of ourselves as a collective, as a movement, and as a *force*—a union, even before the union—then we can start to collectively force meaningful change in the allocation of wages to our emerging labor.

You’ll probably notice the emptied-out cubicles informing you that some EHPs are done waiting. We’ve gone different routes entirely. We’re a generation that envisions museums without walls, and we question this field’s sometimes scary and often shallow politics of engagement, the elitism inherent in our valuing of privileged histories, and the traditional modes and arenas of public history engagement. Many of us are learning that public history, like anything else, can be hacked when it won’t move—so we’re becoming freelancers, launching collectives, working as consultants, and doing hard-hitting applied work as public historians in institutions that do social change work and make the choice to pay us. The field also needs to understand that many of us won’t and can’t *afford* to wait. If we can’t find a job with wages in hallowed archives or museums, or we can’t find a space that will let us do history radically decolonizing enough (because we still have monuments to Custer and Columbus and John C. Calhoun), we’ll do that work ourselves.

After surviving a boxed-in temp job at a traditional public history institution, I forged meaningful space to do innovative environmental oral history work by approaching my state’s grassroots organic food and farm education and advocacy organization to do a statewide oral history project on organics as a social movement. We wrote some grants, and the project got funded. I am now working—though nowhere near full-time—my dream job on my dream project, and I have the flexibility to bring new directions in public history work to new publics (through pop-up exhibits

But if we can start to think of ourselves as a collective, as a movement, and as a *force*—a union, even before the union—then we can start to collectively force meaningful change in the allocation of wages to our emerging labor.

at farmers markets and grocery stores) and to an amazing organization that wouldn't have had the capacity to launch public history work on its own.

Other EHPs are taking similar routes. Shakti Castro writes that public history work continues and often is heightened in direct service positions outside the traditional history field. She refers to this as #AltPH:

“ I would suggest keeping your mind open to #AltPH work. I work in a harm reduction center now, and I still feel I'm functioning, [in] some ways, as a public historian. I'm working with people at intersecting marginalized identities, getting them info, amplifying their concerns, and documenting the center's work for the wider community. I could never have imagined this kind of career, but it's still about history, community, and preservation. ”

Many of us are also experimenting with collectives, collaboratives, and consultancies that shift the locus of where and how the work gets done outside of the usual suspect institutions. The shift is also lateral, as fellow EHPs and comrades combine skills in nimble, emergent, and responsive formations. Our turn to alternative routes and venues has much to do with our vision for a relevant, community-embedded, justice-oriented public history. For some of us, this shift is connected to the hypocrisies we've witnessed and endured trying to merely survive working for organizations that have more talk about access than true access. As EHPs

in the era of Black Lives Matter, we've come to see that the community engagement many traditional public history venues want to claim and genuine community-colaborative change-making are often worlds apart.

As Castro notes, “Public historians often think they're working with [the] community, but they aren't always. It's important to interact with the people, places, and issues that you're interpreting or [doing] oral histories about.” Engagement and outreach at more traditional

public history venues are often more about the closed circuit of marketing than about actual listening. EHPs are learning that other roads may help forge new histories. Making applied and other entrepreneurial routes for public history within direct service organizations is one way that EHPs are remaking relevance.

The applied bent of EHPs is related to the inability of many traditional public history organizations to meet basic material needs for employees. How can we better serve and

expand our communities, forge co-curated partnerships, and divest ourselves from the spaces we've long preserved for white rich men and their expert-selected and -articulated artifacts if our field cannot provide economic justice for our newest and most vulnerable professionals?

Unfortunately, some of the dissonance is traditional. I'm a public folklorist by training. I study the transmission of vernacular expressive cultural forms, and the way that communities traditionalize their own cultural practices by making claims to the past that make life meaningful in the present. One thing we've learned is that there's such a thing as toxic heritage. Not all traditions are liberatory. Old forms, such as anti-blackness, are unceasingly present. Public history needs to look long and hard at what traditional beliefs *we've* ossified around wages and labor, and why we feel compelled to pass them on. ANM (who chose to be identified only by her initials) put it this way:

“ The idea that 'because I did it, you have to' is very prevalent in our field. That we all must make great sacrifices in terms of our financial security for the future and be martyrs to the cause of history. As a professional, there are too many of this old guard who are in charge of making hiring decisions at both the internship and professional levels who hold this mentality close to their ideas about what the field is supposed to be. As a result, if you can't afford to go into debt or refuse to, the field is closed to you. That's not fair and perpetuates the same issues of accessibility and racial homogeneity that museums currently struggle with internally. ”

As Harvee White asserts, this culture literally continues cycles that public history nominally says it's setting out to end. “There's an odd acceptance that if you go into public history and/or museum work that you won't make much money. I think that's one of the main reasons the field isn't as diverse as it could be. Those of us who are historically poor cannot afford to keep the trend going.”

And tellingly these aren't just issues impacting EHPs. Precarity and contingency run all the way up, so these problems don't end when you land a full-time job. As one established professional shared:

“ What about the good long-term employee, who is an emerged professional already? How do managers satisfy the needs of dedicated long-term employees? Clue: [money and] raises. The old saw is that 'money does not buy happiness,' but it does a little if you don't have enough of it, and you need that health insurance, too. ”

The culture is systematic, and while EHPs are especially vulnerable, these concerns are shared by seasoned public historians, who often cannot see a way up. So why repeat old traumas? Why perpetuate cultures of debt and paying dues? Is this really the diverse, accessible future our field is seeking? And are we even seeking it?

Public history, like museum studies and allied cultural work fields, is all tangled up in bad attachments. It's hard to let go of traditions. Especially when those traditions seem tied to economic contingencies, when our field's leaders may feel a need to ask us to endure the same precarity that they lived through. Maybe it's time for rupture. Don't

We're becoming freelancers, launching collectives, working as consultants, and doing hard-hitting applied work as public historians in institutions that do social change work and make the choice to pay us.

tell us we can't ask for more, that it's not the culture here. Don't tell us, "But, it's not just public history—it's the whole field." We're not having it. Tradition, too, can be dynamic and emerging. And what's emerging about EHP labor is our vision that public history work be recognized *as* work, for a more just and sustainable economy. It is not because we don't love the work, but precisely because we do—and because there's real work to be done.

To the field: if you're reading this, and you're upset and want to help change this culture, you may be asking what can you do.

Here are some of the things EHPs are working to build. Please join us in helping to make this field more radically inclusive and open to the voices this field needs most:

- **Pay your interns.** Give them meaningful work. If there's not a budget line, write a grant. Provide housing. Provide food. Show you're hustling to get it together.
- To professors, bosses, and workplace mentors: **teach negotiation and career development skills**, especially for minority candidates. For those of us from underprivileged and working-class backgrounds, these aren't soft skills we've grown up with, and navigating the already cutthroat and precarious environment of public history jobs can lead many of us to burnout or leave because we cannot see a sustainable way forward.
- **Provide professional development and training opportunities** for volunteers, interns, and EHPs. Understand that we're early in our careers, and much of what you brought us here to do requires that we be connected to cutting-edge methods and networked with best practices across the globe.
- Don't give us the gratitude line or the line about how these positions are rare as an excuse for low wages, poor working conditions, slim development and growth opportunities, or exploitation. **What does gratitude have to do with labor?**
- **End cultures of compulsory volunteerism.** Yes, I said it. Many EHPs, especially those in hourly gigs, are likely familiar with jobs that expect extra work like coming in for a critical meeting after your paid hours are up for the week, "But only if you want to." Because, "It's for the good of the organization." It's hard to refuse when we love our work, and refusing these extra tasks often puts our job security and social standing in our organizations at risk. Don't do this to us. If you can only pay someone ten hours a week, then that's that—even if there's a critical meeting on Friday.
- **Post your salaries and pay ranges.** Seriously? Seriously. We know what you're doing when you don't include them.
- **Understand that EHPs may have and may need to have other jobs.** We may be consultants, parents, or activists. We may have to do more because what our public history day job provides is materially or spiritually insufficient. That has to be okay. What's not okay? Questioning our commitment or our chops because we're hustling to make it work when our public history job can't pay the rent.
- **Let us actually do the radical work you likely hired us for. Radical commitments mean radical changes.** That's not always comfortable, especially for public historians at conservative-leaning institutions playing with social justice vocabularies. But it's also okay if EHPs make you uncomfortable. It's kind of why we are here.

Our turn to alternative routes and venues has much to do with our vision for a relevant, community-embedded, justice-oriented public history.

To EHPs: Don't back down. This is our field too and we're needed here. But we're needed as people who can devote ourselves to the hard work of dismantling systems of oppression and cultures of toxic inheritance in a field that has plenty of its own complicities. EHPs like ANM offer some sharp advice:

Do not accept less than what you know you are worth. Also, do research on wages for the organizations and locations you are looking at. If they are nonprofits, all that information is available through their tax records online. GuideStar and Glassdoor are your friends. Also, ask for moving costs.

Several also praised opportunities like the Smithsonian Minority Fellows Program and Smithsonian Latino Museum Studies Fellowship. Others have been real about the fact that their ability to remain in this profession has been dependent on the financial support of parents and spouse or of professors who deliberately trained them to negotiate and survive in a field often hostile to minority practitioners.

It doesn't work to do this work if we're exploited ourselves. One antidote is solidarity, building a collective force not only among EHPs, but also with other precarious and contingent laborers in the public history and cultural fields. Love this work, but recognize and refuse to self-sacrifice the value of your own labor. Love this work, but try not to internalize the violence. Love this work, and love and feel the solidarity with your comrades. We can and are changing this field. EHP labor is already here. As White writes, "I think the field needs to make sure it's not waiting for the world to challenge the status quo. We should be the leaders. Great public history work should be happening in times of silence just as much as during times of unrest." ANM speaks to this idea as well. "Employers need to know that EHPs are not going away and that we will demand that our work is valued not just in [nominal] recognition, but monetarily. We got bills to pay, bruh—at least until the revolution comes."

To Public History: Do you hear us? ●

Jess Lamar Reece Holler is a public historian, community-based folklorist, and cultural worker laboring in the interdisciplinary field of public environmental humanities. She is the principal at Caledonia Northern Folk Studios, a multimodal documentary arts, folklife, public history, and oral history consultancy based in Columbus and Caledonia, Ohio. Reach out to Jess at oldelectricity@gmail.com or via caledonianorthern.org. This piece owes itself to Shakti Castro, Harvee White, ANM, and the other EHPs and emerged professionals who answered the survey and provided such real accounts of their own labor histories in our field and visions for a more just future; and to Hope Shannon, Hannah Hethmon, and Bob Beatty for their editorial vision.

Justice

Resilient

Social change

Blandwood Mansion in Greensboro, North Carolina, is the historic home of North Carolina's twenty-ninth governor, John Motley Morehead.

Talking about Slavery When



BY CAIT JOHNSON

The first time I heard it was on my second day at Blandwood Mansion. I was shadowing a fellow docent on a tour and we had stopped at the butler's pantry. He let the guests look inside before explaining that it was used by servants to bring food from the kitchen to the dining room without being seen. My immediate reaction was confusion. I had only just begun working at Blandwood Mansion, home of John Motley Morehead, North Carolina's twenty-ninth governor, but talking about servants sounded discordant in a wealthy, antebellum southern home. My coworker referenced a nanny and a cook later in the tour, but made no mention of slavery or enslaved people.

At the end of the tour, however, we walked past a label titled “Slavery at Blandwood.” Governor Morehead had been a slaveholder, and in 1850, there were sixty-four enslaved individuals living at Blandwood and his plantation in neighboring Rockingham County. The “servants” my coworker had mentioned were, in fact, enslaved. After the tour, I asked him about his word choice, and he told me that because the Moreheads had continued to live at Blandwood after Emancipation, referring to domestic help as servants rather than slaves was technically correct. Plus, he added, talking about slaves made visitors uncomfortable.

I heard that sentiment repeated a lot my first few weeks working at Blandwood. The short section about slavery in the docent manual ended by saying, “When asked specific questions, please share as much information as possible, but explain that there is very little information available.” As I created my tour script, I asked if it was possible to uncover any additional information about Blandwood’s enslaved population, but was gently shut down with a story of an African American visitor who became so upset by the mention of slavery that the docent decided to omit it from future tours. Another staff member defended Governor Morehead by pointing to the existence of a doctor’s bill documenting medical treatment for several of Blandwood’s enslaved residents as proof of his benevolence.

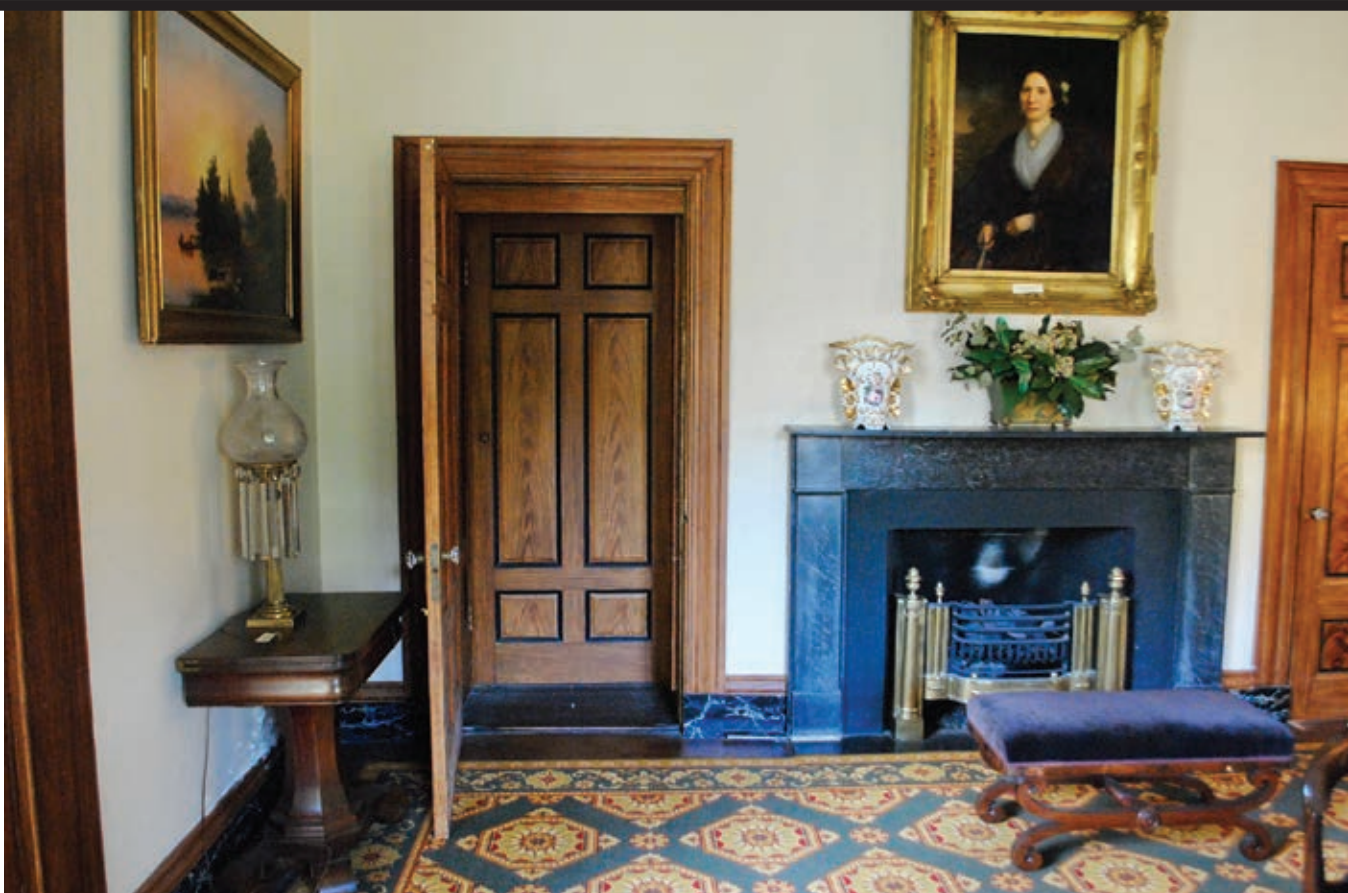
By the end of my first month, I had very mixed feelings about the job. As a graduate student in museum studies, I was eager for an opportunity to gain hands-on experience in the field, but I was also deeply uneasy with how the museum dealt with the interpretation of slavery—vacillating between turning a blind eye to being uncomfortably apologetic toward the slave-owning Governor Morehead. I also realized that as a new museum professional living in the South, this likely would not be the last time I would disagree with how the museum where I worked dealt with slavery.

Talking about Slavery at Historic House Museums

My experience at Blandwood, with its emphasis on architecture and the material culture of the antebellum mansion, is hardly unique. Slavery has long been overlooked on tours of the grand mansions of the South. Instead, these sites focus attention on the grandeur and elegance of the antebellum planter aristocracy. The public history community is acknowledging the importance of addressing difficult history such as slavery, but traditional narratives remain entrenched at many historic house museums.

Photos Cait Johnson

Your Museum Wants to Avoid It



The butler's pantry (now in the east parlor) was used by enslaved people, not servants, to bring food from the kitchen to the dining room.

From the start of America's historic preservation movement, slavery has been a topic that historic houses and museums have preferred to skirt or avoid altogether. Mount Vernon, America's first historic house museum, minimized slavery as an unsavory and contentious issue, despite its legality in Virginia when the house opened as a museum and the fact that many of its founding members were slaveholders themselves. Northern chapters of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association in particular were eager to distance the historical reality of Mount Vernon as a working southern plantation from George Washington's role as a Founding Father.¹

This trend has continued unabated. One-hundred-fifty-nine years after Mount Vernon was established, most historic house museums continue to downplay slavery, if they mention it at all. Far from being an innocuous oversight, historic houses that deemphasize slavery or omit its presence entirely present visitors with a skewed version of history. By downplaying the cruelty of slavery and its centrality to the plantocracy way of life, these interpretations contribute to a false nostalgia for the antebellum period and the Confederacy. This, in turn, leads to a historical amnesia where the brutality of slavery is forgotten and its lingering legacy of subjugation and inequality is perpetually unacknowledged.²

In a 2002 study of 122 southern plantation museums in Virginia, Georgia, and Louisiana, Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small identified four methods historic house museums use to interpret slavery: symbolic annihilation and erasure, trivialization and deflection, segregation and marginalization of knowledge, and relative incorporation. Symbolic annihilation is the most common by far. It occurs when slavery is either entirely absent from the site's interpretation or only perfunctorily mentioned. These houses focus exclusively on the lives of the slaveholders, and if enslaved individuals are mentioned, it is in generalized and passive terms. Trivialization and deflection, the second most common strategy, utilizes the trope of the happy slave as part of a benevolent institution. In this mode, enslaved people are mentioned, sometimes even by name, but the narrative is still firmly focused on the white slaveholders. Far less common are segregation—relegating any discussion of slavery to specific locations or thematic tours—and relative incorporation—combining the lives of slaveholders and enslaved people into a cohesive narrative.³

Blandwood Mansion employs a combination of symbolic annihilation, trivialization and deflection, and segregation when it does (or does not) discuss slavery. Depending on the docent, it is possible to never hear the word "slavery" on a tour. It is not a systematic attempt to erase the presence of enslaved people at Blandwood—what information the site has about the house's enslaved population is in the docent manual. However, guides are encouraged to create tour scripts based on their personal interest. Without support and training, many of the all-white interpretation staff are simply uncomfortable interpreting slavery.

A single wayfinding label next to the back staircase is dedicated to slavery at Blandwood, but even there an attempt has been made to soften the narrative. The first half of the panel

Location matters. Introducing the story of Blandwood's cook Hannah Jones in the kitchen where she did much of her work places her story in the physical context of the narrative.



focuses on slavery in North Carolina and proposals that then-North Carolina state representative Morehead introduced to the House of Commons on behalf of his abolitionist Quaker constituents. The actual enslaved people are only mentioned in the second half of the label, which still focuses more on the Morehead family than the enslaved residents. While the museum has uncovered the names of at least eleven enslaved people, it includes only a single one. The label also states that the Moreheads provided medical care for enslaved workers and freedmen and -women continuing to work at Blandwood after Emancipation, essentially implying a benign version of enslavement at the Morehead plantation.

Talking about Slavery as a New Professional

While I am profoundly uncomfortable with the idea that my tours are contributing to the false nostalgia of slavery, I have also found myself at a loss for what to do, a situation many emerging history and museum professionals share. Incorporating the history of enslavement at Blandwood into the interpretive plan would be a major shift in the site's institutional identity. Interpretation of Blandwood revolves around the "remarkably complete ensemble of nineteenth-century art, architecture, furnishings, and landscape." Tours primarily focus on the furniture, the majority of which is original to the house; much of the staff's energy has been devoted to researching the material culture of Blandwood.



Devoid of any extant artifacts of its enslaved population, any discussion of slavery will be an afterthought under the current interpretive mandate.⁴

Another challenge to expanding Blandwood's narrative is the lack of information about its enslaved population. The names of eleven enslaved people survive in the Morehead family's papers. Many more formerly enslaved individuals with the family name appear in marriage records following Emancipation, but there is little specific information or personal details. We can make guesses based on information about other slaveholding families, but there are few opportunities to bring these exact people's stories to life.

None of these obstacles is insurmountable. An increasing number of historic house museums have successfully incorporated enslaved populations into their narrative. It requires top-down institutional investment. New professionals rarely find themselves in the position to enact that kind of change, but we can be the catalyst for future growth.

In Eichstedt and Small's study of historic plantation house museums, 55 percent of the sites mention slavery or enslaved people less than four times, and 25 percent of the homes did not mention slavery at all. While this is slowly improving, far too many historic houses continue to ignore their history with slavery.⁵

New and emerging professionals typically do not control the interpretive identity of their sites, but they can control how they conduct their own tours and programs. Many historic house museums, including Blandwood, allow docents

a degree of flexibility in creating personalized tour scripts. I might not have the ability to fully incorporate the experience of Blandwood's enslaved population into the tour, but I can make sure to include these stories. Being open and honest about slavery at Blandwood and including the few known personal details about individual enslaved people goes a long way to restoring their humanity and highlighting their roles in the site's story.

I can also control when and where slavery is discussed. I preface every tour with a discussion of slavery at Blandwood, and continue to mention it at appropriate locations throughout the tour. For example, instead of mentioning Hannah Jones, Blandwood's cook, and her chicken and possum pie while standing near the "Slavery at Blandwood" label, I instead introduce her in the kitchen, which places her story in the physical context of the house. It is a far cry from fully incorporating the enslaved population into Blandwood's narrative, but it is also a significant improvement upon ignoring their presence. Small changes like these can lay the groundwork for more comprehensive inclusion in the future.

Talking about Slavery Today

For many sites, a fundamental shift in how they interpret the sordid aspects of the past is necessary. Recent tragedies in Charleston, South Carolina, and Charlottesville, Virginia, have made it increasingly clear that the narratives of the Confederacy and what it stood for (the preservation and advancement of slavery) still hold tremendous sway. Perhaps now more than ever, it is imperative that we have an open dialogue about these issues.

Historic house museums that downplay the harsh reality of slavery or omit it completely from the narrative contribute to a rose-colored, sanitized memory of what the Confederacy was fighting for. Museums are a powerful tool for shaping collective identity. History professionals—both emerging and well-established—have an obligation to make sure that identity is founded in truth. It is not enough for new professionals to wait until they are established to confront these issues. No matter what stage they are in their career, any public historian can take steps to ensure their museum is working toward a more honest, open discussion of slavery. ●

Cait Johnson is a second-year museum studies Masters student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She is focusing on education, digital history, and exhibit design. She can be reached by email at cait.d.johnson@gmail.com or on Twitter, @MintTeaRex.

¹ Patricia West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999).

² Amanda G. Seymour, "Pride and Prejudice: Interpreting Slavery at the Homes of Five Founding Fathers," in *Interpreting African American History and Culture at Museums and Historic Sites*, ed. Max A. van Balgooy (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 3–12.

³ Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small, *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002).

⁴ Preservation Greensboro, "Governor Morehead's Blandwood Mansion," Governor Morehead's Blandwood Mansion, April 28, 2015.

⁵ Eichstedt and Small, *Representations of Slavery*, 108.

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HUNGRY FOR HISTORY:



Teachers attending the June 2017 Selma, Alabama, Bicentennial Summer Institute stand with Jawana Jackson in front of the Jean Jackson House.

BRINGING SOCIAL STUDIES



Susan DuBoise



BY CAROLINE GIBBONS

During summer 2017, almost 300 elementary school teachers across Alabama attended twelve new social studies professional development sessions. Hosted by the Alabama Bicentennial Commission (ABC), each workshop focused on training teachers to tell Alabama’s story through local history. At the Selma location, teachers explored the city’s connections to the Civil Rights Movement, making a stop at an old house on Lapsley Street along the way. It is located within a block of both Selma University and the home of civil rights activist Amelia Boynton, which African American educator Richard Byron Hudson built in 1906. As the teachers gathered around, owner Jawana Jackson recounted the house’s pivotal role in the Movement. In the 1960s, Jackson’s parents, Dr. Sullivan and Richie Jean Sherrod Jackson, hosted Southern Christian Leadership Conference leaders—including Martin Luther King Jr., Ralph Abernathy, and Andrew Young—as they organized the Selma to Montgomery March. Jackson indicated where her Uncle Martin once sat in their living room, which looked just as it had in 1965. Spellbound, some teachers had tears in their eyes. They had never known the house was there, let alone heard its story.

The visit to the house and the teachers’ reactions reflect the hunger Alabama’s elementary school teachers have for resources and opportunities to learn new stories from the state’s history and to share them with their students. Teachers often don’t have the time or resources to make connections with history, and opportunities for meaningful and engaging professional development in social studies are few and far between. With the advent of the 2001 federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), standardized testing results in reading and math dictated federal funding for schools. In turn, teacher professional development, instructional time, and content focused on reading and math at the expense of social studies, science, and the arts.¹

BACK TO ALABAMA

This had a deleterious effect on the teaching of history and social studies in Alabama.

Because nearly three-fourths of the teachers surveyed during the Alabama Bicentennial Commission's 2017 workshops began teaching after the implementation of NCLB, they only know an educational environment that marginalizes social studies. As a result, teachers reported a lack of time and training to find primary sources and lesson plans needed to teach the state's history.

The lack of preparation to teach Alabama history, combined with neglect of the subject, only exacerbated the marginalization of social studies in Alabama. A 2017 survey of undergraduate elementary education programs at Alabama colleges and universities revealed a troubling lack of history coursework. Only three of the twenty-three programs surveyed require more than two college history courses. These programs typically limit history coursework to one or two general United States or world history classes; none requires a course in Alabama history. Data from ABC teacher surveys verify these findings, showing 67 percent of participating teachers took only one or two social studies (not even history) courses during their undergraduate careers. Only 23

percent of respondents felt their pre-service experience and coursework left them well-prepared to teach social studies compared to reading and math.

In preparation for the state's 200th birthday in 2019, the Alabama Bicentennial Commission is in a position to transform social studies education

in Alabama. Efforts launched in March 2017, the bicentennial anniversary of the Alabama Territory. The commemoration period will span three years and culminate with the Alabama Day celebration on the bicentennial of Alabama statehood, December 14, 2019. Prominent among a wide array of programming is a three-year emphasis on primary source-focused professional development and curriculum development. Bicentennial Commission programs combat the marginalization of social studies, improve the teaching of history, and provide teachers in all sixty-seven of the state's counties with resources and support to foster critical thinking skills, promote digital literacy, and encourage civic understanding in the classroom.

Designed to train 360 teachers from 2017 through 2019, the professional development program focuses on teaching Alabama history across the curriculum in third through fifth grades. The workshops emphasize cross-curricular connections with technology, language arts, science, and math. Modeled on highly successful National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) summer institutes for school teachers, our program incorporates visits to Alabama historic sites, engagement with primary sources, and guest lectures. As

with NEH workshops, participants receive stipends and supplementary resources. To keep elementary school teachers engaged, we emphasize an alternating schedule of brief lectures and hands-on activities that model engagement with primary sources and historical thinking.

The structure of the professional development program also draws on the results of the Alabama History Education Initiative through teacher interviews and training led by Susan DuBose, Alabama Bicentennial Commission education coordinator. (She also led the Alabama History Education Initiative.) Each workshop includes instruction on the differences between primary and secondary sources. In addition, because DuBose's research found that teachers who used primary sources treated them with absolute authority and failed to include multiple perspectives and account for bias when using them, we also taught the importance of using a variety of sources.

The professional development program began with the selection of a dozen master teachers based on exemplary classroom performance and expertise. Each represents a different region of the state. In July 2016, DuBose led this group through an intensive week of pedagogy, field trips to historic sites, and lessons in Alabama history. Afterward, the master teachers collaborated with our staff and an assigned content specialist—often historians from local colleges and universities—to create professional development sessions. Each master teacher and content specialist built a three-and-a-half-day experience for thirty teachers. Though the content and activities varied by location, workshops follow a basic structure: day one focuses on acquainting participants with the basics of Alabama history; day two features field trips; day three is a pedagogy day; and day four, a half-day, is a presentation and collaboration day. The master teacher leads the sessions; content specialists provide expertise, answer questions, and debunk myths; and guest speakers present special topics. Since teachers are usually expected to pay for supplies and training themselves, demonstrating understanding of their limited finances is one way we communicate our commitment to them as professionals. Therefore, we provide participants with materials, books, a stipend, and lunch.

Through professional development, we provide teachers with resources to teach Alabama's history through their own communities. In 2017, the program's content focused on the importance of local places and stories. Each workshop featured trips to local historic sites and cultural institutions. In Thomasville, participants explored the history of Alabama's Black Belt in Wilcox County, with visits to historic Camden, Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center, and the Gee's Bend Quilters Collective. Teachers at Fort Payne discovered the area's Cherokee connections by visiting Trail of Tears sites and experiencing the sacred site Manitou Cave. Each of the sites were little-known to the workshop participants. Visiting these cultural and historic sites exposed teachers to new stories from their communities that they were excited to take back to their classrooms. One teacher at Selma responded that her experience "ignited a fire and a sense of urgency to learn more about MY history."²²

Teachers often collaborated with historians from local colleges and universities to create professional development sessions.

Historians' participation is vital to the success of the program. Their expertise prompts difficult conversations and pushes teachers to view history in different ways. At the Auburn workshop, historian of slavery Kelly Kennington engaged participants in analysis of bills of sale of enslaved persons. She also walked the group through Works Progress Administration (WPA) slave narratives from a county in the Auburn area. Kennington's choices hit home when two teachers from that county noticed that the last names of the slave owners in the narratives were those of students at their school. The discovery led to lively discussion of problems with using WPA slave narratives and how to modify them for use in elementary classrooms by removing dialect and editing out names. The tension in the room was palpable and teachers left unsure of whether they would feel comfortable using the narratives. But they had engaged critically with the documents.

We also constantly encourage engagement with primary sources through cross-curricular, hands-on activities. One activity uses programmable robots to teach the history of Alabama's five capitals. Students employ basic coding skills to make the robots travel chronologically to each capital along a print of an 1833 Alabama map. Thus, students not only use technology and problem-solving skills, but they also engage with a primary source. Breakout EDU boxes (breakoutedu.com), modeled on the escape-room concept, are another wildly popular activity. We hired an instructional coach to create Alabama history-themed game boxes. Using creativity, teamwork, and critical thinking, players break into the boxes using primary sources to solve puzzles to crack the locks. One survey respondent at Fort Payne stated that the workshop encouraged her to "implement a more hands-on method in my social studies class instead of just reading straight from the book." A respondent from Dothan noted that unlike other workshops she attended, ours "had many activities and ideas that I will take back and use in my classroom," while another mentioned that she would begin incorporating history activities into her math classes. So that resources reach as many teachers as possible, we have participants share an activity with colleagues at their schools. We require them to provide documentation of their presentation. This fall, we've reached 308 additional teachers from 15 schools.

Reaching teachers is an ongoing concern. For the first summer of workshops, relying on superintendent nominations for our pool of participants created significant problems. Many superintendents were nonresponsive. When they did respond, they didn't necessarily nominate teachers who were interested or had time. As a result, some nominees failed to attend, taking space from teachers we had turned away. We also found that soliciting nominations restricted the pool, as the selected teachers were not necessarily those who needed training the most. Since accessibility is a major component of our mission, we're publicizing workshop registration through social media and e-newsletters and allowing participants to self-select in 2018.

Outside of the professional development program, curriculum development focuses on primary sources. We modeled our program on the National Archives's *DocsTeach* and the Library of Congress's *Teaching with Primary Sources*. Both programs provided the inspiration to bundle primary sources into themed packets with matched teaching standards. Unlike these two national projects, our curriculum project compiles primary sources from multiple repositories to provide teachers with access to different perspectives. We package documents from Alabama's archives in curated sets and include trusted secondary sources for context. We also match each document with relevant 2010 Alabama Course of Study, Social Studies content standards.

The project began with a survey of available teacher resources that identified curriculum gaps. Finding that few resources existed for the history of early Alabama, we

Students from Huxford Elementary in Atmore, Alabama, wave bicentennial flags on the capitol steps after the March 3, 2017, press conference in Montgomery, Alabama.



Carson Williford

began with documents from that era. As the architect of the primary source sets, I'm responsible for producing four to five sets of fifty documents per year through the end of 2019, covering topics such as: World War I, agriculture, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Progressive Era. The program initially emphasized producing lesson plans using the primary source sets. Surveys reported that many teachers lacked instructional time to use full lesson plans, so we are transitioning to producing quick activities that will encourage historical investigation and critical thinking. We plan to recruit and compensate teachers to submit activities that use items from our document packages and introduce or augment classroom topics. Activities will be hosted on our website and at the *Alabama Learning Exchange*, a well-known repository for classroom resources.

The influence of the Alabama History Education Initiative also carries over to the curriculum project. Much of its teacher training focused on telling national and global stories

through Alabama primary sources. We continue to use this approach, highlighting the state's key roles in events ranging from Indian removal, the Civil War, the Civil Rights Movement, and the space program. This project brings Alabama stories to life through primary sources that were previously unknown and inaccessible to teachers. While our programs primarily serve grades three through five, the curriculum project provides documents matched to content standards for grades six through

twelve as well. However, when selecting documents, I consider students in grades three through five as the primary audience. Photographs, images, and artifacts are excellent sources for elementary students.³

In many cases, the most useful primary sources aren't available online. Therefore, incorporating primary sources from archives around Alabama has also led to the creation of a small-scale digitization program. Building the Space and Technology packet required multiple trips to the Huntsville area to access NASA-related primary sources. Portable scanner in hand, I've combed the archives at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center, the University of Alabama in Huntsville, and Alabama A&M University, and plan to visit other institutions as the project progresses. I process the images, compose the metadata, and send the repository the original and altered versions for their own use. Using these documents mined from archives across the state, we envision creating an online database of hundreds of curated primary sources.

Despite an emphasis on accessibility, providing access to the primary source packets has been challenging. The packets originated as spreadsheets, which were visually unappealing and difficult to distribute. We instead sought an eye-catching format that would allow maximum accessibility, easy skimming of primary sources, and visibility of content standards to minimize search time. When the commission hired a design firm to build a website, we agreed that the packets should be housed there, rather than on a separate website, but creating the database has been plagued with delays and communication issues. With a grant award, our objectives changed during the design process, requiring reconfiguration to drive site traffic to archival repositories rather than allow teachers to download documents from our website. I worked closely with our webmaster to bend the design firm's content management system to our will, tweaking metadata fields, page layouts, and image sizes to suit teachers' needs. At the time of this writing, the early Alabama history packet is now live after six months of wrestling with the content management system. With the back end of the database complete, we can easily add new packets and expect World War I, Space and Technology, and Civics packets to be available by December 2017.

As we near the end of the first full year of programming, it is clear to us that Alabama teachers are desperate for time and resources to teach social studies. Treating teachers as professionals and giving them the support they deserve is crucial to their success and that of our programs. But more than that, it's essential to the success of our state. We can't afford to ignore social studies, particularly at the elementary level. We envision creating such a demand for history education resources that our initiatives outlive the bicentennial commemoration, but this will be possible only if attitudes toward social studies education change. Shining the light on a cross-curricular approach to Alabama history has ignited excitement about social studies that we're ready to harness. We know that giving elementary school teachers tools to explore our state's difficult history will get primary sources into classrooms and plant historical inquiry skills in the minds of students. For now, our job is to keep building and to shine a light in every corner of Alabama. Through the bicentennial, every child in every school should be able to see themselves in our state's history and feel that they belong here. As history professionals, we owe it to them, and we owe it to the future of Alabama. ©

Caroline Gibbons is the Education Program Specialist for the Alabama Bicentennial Commission in Montgomery, Alabama. Caroline received a B.A. in History in 2013 and an M.A. in history with an Archival Studies Certificate in 2016, both from Auburn University. She is passionate about Alabama history and forging a bright future for all Alabamians. She can be reached at caroline.gibbons@archives.alabama.gov.

¹ Jack Jennings and Diane Stark Rentner, "Ten Big Effects of the No Child Left Behind Act on Public Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan* 88, no. 2 (November 2009): 110-111.

² All quotes derive from post-session evaluations compiled by the Alabama Bicentennial Commission.

³ When I select a handwritten document, I always include a transcription to facilitate ease of use in the classroom.

We envision creating such a demand for history education resources that our initiatives outlive the commemoration, but this will be possible only if attitudes toward social studies education change.

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“Do You Have Anything in Your Museum

about me?”



BY BREANN VELASCO

*Above: The exhibit, **Todos Unidos: The Hispanic Experience in Flagstaff**, inside the main gallery of the Pioneer Museum.*

My passion for history originated from early experiences of going to museums with my family. Three years ago, I obtained my first museum job at the Arizona Historical Society’s Pioneer Museum and Riordan Mansion State Historic Park in Flagstaff, Arizona. During an outreach event at an elementary school, a young Hispanic girl asked if we had anything in our museum about her. I answered that we had nothing. As an American of Mexican descent, this made very clear to me our failure to represent all communities in our museum. In response, the Arizona Historical Society took a step toward changing this by allowing me to curate an exhibit about Flagstaff’s Hispanic community. It was a project that meant a great deal internally and externally as the community had long been neglected in Flagstaff’s traditional narrative, and it was up to me to get it right. I had a passion to tell this story and felt it was important to move this project forward. I was fortunate to be able to lead coworkers, some of whom had far more experience in the field than I, in curating an exhibit that addressed this.

Visitors enjoying the exhibit on the opening night of *Todos Unidos: The Hispanic Experience in Flagstaff*.



The Arizona Historical Society's mission is to collect, preserve, interpret, and disseminate the history of Arizona. Although the mission is broad, it has not historically been all-encompassing. This is something the institution readily admits to and is striving to remedy. Before *Todos Unidos: The Hispanic Experience in Flagstaff*, the rich history of contributions by Flagstaff's Hispanic community was missing from the Pioneer Museum altogether.

I originally proposed the exhibition as my thesis project for a graduate degree in history at Northern Arizona University. I ultimately decided to not pursue the degree, a decision that left the exhibit in jeopardy. But *Todos Unidos* had become my passion project, a personal story I felt greatly invested in. So even though my position with the Arizona Historical Society was classified as a part-time seasonal position, I asked to remain the lead curator. The reality of creating a product that I would be proud of came at a cost. If I wanted to be successful with the exhibit, I understood I would have to work beyond my normal job function. I would have to work more hours than I could technically be paid; it would cut into my own personal time; and I would be taking on responsibilities that were outside of my position. Would this be worth it? I knew it would. I would gain valuable experience; my confidence in museum work would rise; and, most importantly, I would be helping to provide a platform for this community's story. My persistence paid off, and the experience has been extremely rewarding.

Curating *Todos Unidos* brought out some of the challenges and rewards of working within a multigenerational team. We have a staff of seven in the Northern Division of the Arizona

Historical Society, and women make up over half of our workforce. I am one of two Millennials on staff; the rest are Baby Boomers and Generation Xers. The entire staff wanted to see this story told in our museum.

Though my approach challenged some of the team's traditional methods of engaging the public, my coworkers supported me taking the lead on this exhibit. For example, two decades earlier, the museum had presented a similar exhibit on the Hispanic community in Flagstaff. However, the community felt it did not properly reflect the personality and true experiences of the Hispanic community. In addition, staff failed to address uncomfortable or unfamiliar topics. For *Todos Unidos*, I was determined to do better. I wanted to provide visitors with a new understanding about what it would be like to live in Flagstaff as a person of color.

I also sought to address how we used language. The term "pioneer" elicits certain understandings and expectations. The Pioneer Museum's typical audience consists of retired Anglo-American Baby Boomers, and many of these visitors expect to learn about settlers traveling west to start a new life, and to see old wagons, butter churns, or other items that represent the experiences of their ancestors. *Todos Unidos*

Todos Unidos demonstrated the different meanings of the term "pioneer."

demonstrated the different meanings of the term “pioneer.” We used Merriam-Webster’s definition—“a person or group that originates or helps open a new line of thought or activity in a territory”—to reframe our audience’s idea of the term.

We also employed a new exhibition layout for *Todos Unidos*, choosing not to follow a linear path through the lives of the Hispanic people in Flagstaff, but instead to focus topically in order to spark visitor dialogue. For example, although each exhibit case focuses on a different topic, we discuss discrimination and segregation in each. Racism was, and is, a fact of everyday life for Hispanic people in Northern Arizona. Instead of isolating it in one part of the exhibit, we acknowledge it throughout.

I was proud to lead the team in discussions of how to tackle these kinds of difficult issues. We felt it was important to tell even the hardest stories to ensure we created an authentic narrative. “If we did not include these pivotal moments and life experiences,” we asked ourselves, “would we be sanitizing history?” To this end, *Todos Unidos* also provides space for difficult discussions about segregation in education and religion, particularly in the local Catholic parish.

We also dedicated a section of the exhibit, “A Visible Legacy,” to celebrating Hispanic pioneers. Each pioneering family provided us with a keepsake photo, a contemporary photo, and a small biography of their family. We wanted this area to honor the families who have been here for generations. This section continues to grow as we are continuously making new connections with members of the Hispanic community.

At times, I notice an indifference to *Todos Unidos* from our traditional audience. Social media sites, such as TripAdvisor, are full of positive comments about our traditional exhibits, but none mention *Todos Unidos*. Like the young girl who asked the question that sparked my work on this exhibition, most visitors expect to see exhibits and artifacts associated with their past. As I welcome and introduce them to *Todos Unidos*, their eyes often shift away from my own, and I lose their focus and attention. As soon as I begin to mention our more traditional exhibits, I notice their eyes revert to mine and I have their attention again. It is fascinating to see this shift. Our typical visitors sometimes struggle to relate to the exhibit and compare this information to their own history. It is a complete role switch from my experience trying to find history in a museum that reflects my family heritage. Perhaps being put in a minority position, even just for a short time, will help expand understandings of what it means to be a pioneer. We want to challenge our typical visitor with our new approach to exhibits.

By bringing in more diverse, personal stories, we can also attract a newer demographic of visitors. We added exhibit components that we hoped would attract people who typically do not visit the Pioneer Museum. We utilized different media platforms, such as geocaching, to reach new audiences. I helped create a series of caches in neighborhoods significant to the Hispanic community. When you find one of our caches, we provide an abbreviated history of the neighborhood or building along with a historical picture. Geocachers have responded positively and thanked us for providing history they were not aware of.

For me, developing relationships with the local Hispanic community proved to be the most intimidating part of the process. For many years, the historical narrative at the Pioneer Museum focused on prominent white citizens of Northern Arizona. Our collection reflects these limitations. The lack of objects representing Flagstaff’s Hispanic community became clear as we planned *Todos Unidos*. Not only were we in dire need of exhibit objects, but we also needed the support and participation of the families whose history we were telling. The Pioneer Museum had told this story decades earlier, but then put Hispanic history aside. This lack of continued, sincere interest caused the Hispanic community to become protective of their history. And although I, too, am of Mexican ancestry, I was an outsider. Local Hispanics were

cautious of me when I expressed interest in their history, and when I began sharing the story of my family’s roots in America. Although not native to Arizona, I found common ground being Hispanic in the United States. Regardless of my own heritage, I had to prove I had this community’s best interest at heart.

As part of my effort to establish relationships with the Hispanic community, I reached out to Flagstaff Nuestras Raíces, an organization established by the families of Hispanic pioneers to preserve their history, and other local groups. I attended meetings to explain the goals of *Todos Unidos* and open a long-overdue dialogue. To make sure the story we told was authentic, I asked for help in identifying community members to contribute. I made great contacts. The museum received a mud flap from the Vasquez family, which had operated an independent logging company. We displayed this object in a gallery. The museum also received personal memorabilia from the Ceballos family, proving to us we had made headway in establishing a trusting connection. When the exhibit comes down, all label copy and objects will be relocated to permanent exhibits. Now when Hispanic visitors come to the Pioneer Museum, they will see their history alongside stories of Anglo-Americans.



Museum staff member Joe Meehan dry mounts photos during the installation of *Todos Unidos*.

Todos Unidos featured a World War I uniform, an El Charro jacket with hand stitched embroidery, and a uniform of the Monterrey Baseball Club.



Todos Unidos: The Hispanic Experience in Flagstaff opened in April 2017. Many Hispanic families attended the grand opening and the exhibit was warmly received. It felt great to see members of the community recognize their story in a museum. As I walked around the galleries, I overheard people discussing their own lives and how they related to what we had on display. Since April, members of the Hispanic

We want to challenge our typical visitor with our new approach to exhibits.

community have regularly visited the museum. Not only have local families enjoyed *Todos Unidos*, but Hispanic people visiting from elsewhere in Arizona have shared with staff their appreciation. Because of my experience curating *Todos Unidos*, I have a better understanding of my own ancestry, and I see my story represented in a museum.

Todos Unidos is scheduled to end in August 2018. But we will not lock away in a file cabinet the lessons and stories we learned. We instead plan to incorporate this information into our permanent galleries, where we will continue including all voices in Flagstaff's history.

Looking back, I can identify some specific learning moments from my experience with *Todos Unidos*. First, I would change the name of the exhibit. Seeing "Hispanic" in the title provoked varied reactions among visitors. Some became disinterested or uncomfortable with the exhibit name, or they assumed some sort of political angle to its content. Since we are trying to reframe the definition of "pioneer," I would have instead titled the exhibit, *Todos*

Unidos: Another Pioneer Experience, or simply, *Todos Unidos*. I also learned that the personal stories we included have been very popular. No matter their background, visitors understood the struggles of the working class, or the pride and hardships of serving in the military, or what it means to have deep roots somewhere and having to plant new roots in another place.

I curated this exhibit for people like me who feel their stories are not acknowledged in museums. *Todos Unidos* allowed me to find my own unique story in a museum, and I helped build a platform in my institution for a community whose voice had long been ignored. We worked to shed light on an overlooked community whose life and work also made Flagstaff into what it is today. Hispanic people in Flagstaff, in Northern Arizona, and in many other towns across the country have shaped and furthered their communities. Their contributions should also be recognized and their struggles exposed to ensure their legacies live on. Now, as an American of Mexican descent, I can walk through the Pioneer Museum proudly knowing that the contributions of this Hispanic community are being told and that the little girl I mentioned at the beginning of this article now has a piece of her story in the museum. ©

Breann Velasco, a third-generation Mexican-American, received her B.A. in history with a minor in Museum Studies at Northern Arizona University in 2014. For the last four years, Breann has worked for the Arizona Historical Society as a Museum Operations Technician. Her responsibilities include collections management, developing and leading interpretive programs, and curating exhibits. Breann's work at the AHS gives her the privilege of telling meaningful stories while making history engaging and fun for visitors. She can be reached at bvelasco@azhs.gov.



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Museum People Podcast

by New England Museum Association (NEMA)

3 Seasons (2016-present)

Reviewed by Hannah Hethmon

In one of the earliest episodes of the *Museum People* podcast, Marieke Van Damme suggests that in order to grow as a field, we need more “time to sit and think about the big issues that you don’t have time [for] normally. We need that connectivity and space and time.... We don’t give ourselves the permission to think these big questions.”¹

Museum People is filling this gap in our professional lives. Through thoughtful questioning, a bit of humor, and a lot of editing, Dan Yaeger and Marieke Van Damme have accomplished what most of us in the field just dream of for ourselves



and our institutions: an intimate space for authentic connections that costs nothing to enter, works with every schedule, and has no limit on attendance.

In each episode of the podcast, Yaeger and Van

Damme offer short interviews with fascinating people from every part of the museum field. Guests on the show are introduced, connected, and processed with just the right amount of banter between the hosts. The interviews themselves expand our assumptions about which voices within our organizations should be heard and what role museums should be playing in our communities.

One of the most downloaded episodes is Season 2, Episode 8, an interview with museum security guard Kathy McGaughey, a ceramics artist whose work in museums provides her with a unique perspective on what actually goes on in galleries. McGaughey describes her position as “simultaneously invisible but also the most public face of the museum,” and her conversation with Yaeger explores bias against the position from outside and within the field.²

While searching for comparable podcasts, I was surprised to find only a handful of shows about museum work. Of those, very few have managed to effectively translate our field’s knack for storytelling and presentation into the podcast



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medium. Many run into the pitfall of overly lengthy episodes that are less a curated audio experience and more like a recording of a lecture or panel discussion. With a DIY equipment budget and editing skills honed on the job, Van Damme and Yaeger have produced a podcast of impressive quality that quickly drew me in. Each episode leaves me feeling a bit more connected to my fellow Museum People and inspired to think more critically about the field.

As you might expect, there's a clear learning curve at work for much of the first season as the hosts improve their skills in interviewing subjects, recording, and editing. If you haven't listened before, start with the podcast's second season. There's no chronological order to the episodes, so you won't miss anything by jumping in after they've significantly improved the quality of the episodes.

The show's third season wrapped up in March 2017, and it appears that a fourth season is in the works. As *Museum People* grows its audience, I hope that more organizations and individuals in our field will be inspired to take up podcasting and

expand this invaluable work in connectivity beyond the New England museum community. ©



Hannah Hethmon is a Fulbright Fellow in Reykjavik,

Iceland, where she is researching Icelandic museum culture. She holds an M.A. in Medieval Icelandic Studies and earned her public history stripes as an AASLH staffer from 2015-2017. She is the host of *Museums in Strange Places*, a podcast about Icelandic museums (available on iTunes or at hhethmon.com). She can be reached at info@hhethmon.com or on Twitter @hannah_rfh.

¹ Marieke Van Damme, and Dan Yaeger. "Episode Seven: Museum Studies Programs." *Museum People*. Podcast audio, February, 2016.

² Marieke Van Damme, and Dan Yaeger. "Season 2, Episode 8 – September 14, 2016." *Museum People*. Podcast audio, September, 2016.



Manual of Digital Museum Planning

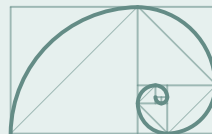
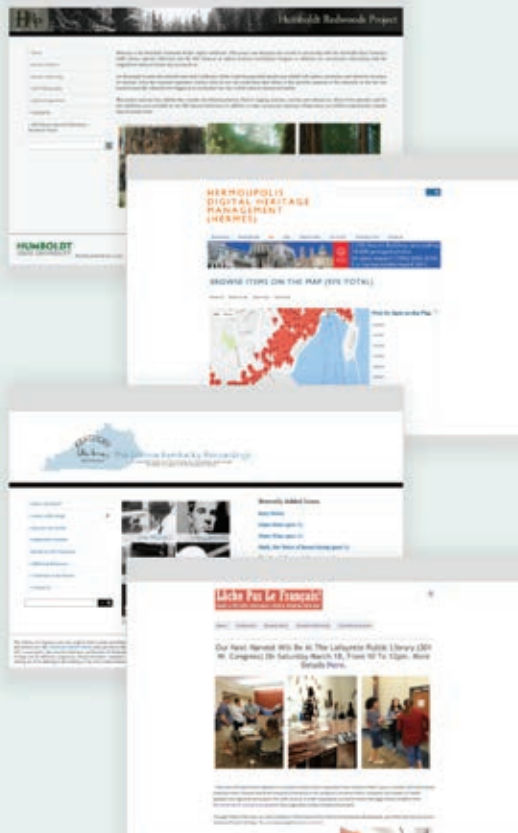
By Ali Hossaini, Ngaire Blankenberg, Gail Dexter Lord, and Barry Lord, eds.

(Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017), 418 pp.

Reviewed by Ty Pierce

The *Manual of Digital Museum Planning* aims to provide an overview of museum technology

and covers a wide range of binary turf in the process. At the core of discussion is the concept of the museum as an omni-channel institution, a term nimbly coopted from retail that describes a user-centric approach to "Give customers what they want, when they want it, and how they want it, through every possible channel" (14). The contributors astutely point out that many museums are already on this



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path—an organization's website and social media profiles qualify as multiple channels—and the book holds this concept as a strong and consistent through-line.

Chapters are written for a non-technical audience and wisely eschew discussions of specific tools or software in favor of applicable ideas. Topics run the gamut from social media and analytics to project management and digital placemaking. Contributors cover each topic in a way that leans toward pragmatic breadth rather than technical depth and provide interested readers with a thorough overview. The book reinforces concepts through several recurring elements: graphics are informative, sidebars contain key terms and definitions, case studies and brief interviews add context, and each chapter ends with a summary of key takeaways. The authors also cross-reference other chapters to connect material and create a more cohesive feel than many edited collections.

Students and those new to the field will benefit from the overview this volume

provides, as will staff in small and medium-sized institutions who wear many hats. But the ideal reader is museum leadership. Regardless of an institution's size or mission, this book will improve these leaders' digital fluency, allowing them to make crucial decisions that balance the costs and impact of digital against other initiatives.

This point is underlined by the fact that the longest chapter, "Planning for IT Infrastructure," serves to demystify the many boxes and wires that make up costly internal systems so non-information technology staff can better understand the building blocks of their museum's digital foundation. The authors do this very well, and the book consistently provides enough information to be relevant without getting bogged down in ones and zeros.

Understandably, this approach might make the book less applicable to tech-savvy readers who require more depth and detail. Leadership in the digital museum space often comes from management and staff, rather than the executive level, but there is little discussion on

effectively advocating for digital in a field that still values analog engagement much more highly—and devotes its resources accordingly. That said, since the book's focus is on actionable ideas rather than specific technology, it's worth a read by digital staff to identify other museum channels for their work and to learn about new opportunities for impact.

Any number of blogs and learning networks dive into specific pieces of museum technology, but few provide a solid foundation across most of the key technologies available to our field. As a comprehensive overview with just the right amount of future-speak, the *Manual of Digital Museum Planning* is as timely as it is ambitious. Hopefully this resource will help inform and foment the change that moves us all one step closer to the true potential of the digital museum. ●



Ty Pierce is currently Product Manager at OCLC after serving since 2012 as Manager of Education and Multimedia

Services at the Ohio History Connection. He can be reached at tmlpierce@gmail.com or on Twitter @tmlpierce.

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Knowing Our Worth

By John Dichtl, AASLH President & CEO

Turning over this issue of *History News* to our Emerging History Professionals (EHPs) brings a jolt of new perspectives to a magazine that's been capturing the field's latest and best developments since 1941. So much has changed in AASLH's seventy-eight years. But one thing that hasn't is the next generation's desire to make an impact in the field of history and to introduce fresh ideas.

Are we ready for them? As the authors in this issue of *History News* remind us, there are more people coming into the field than for whom there currently are full-time jobs. This has long been the case, stretching back to the early 1970s. When an academic job market crisis hit, the academy responded by creating what it called "public history," a name that described what historical societies, history museums, and others had always been doing. Public historians from universities and those that got their training on the job never stopped refining the concepts and methodology of the field, and today there are more than 170 public history Master's programs in the U.S. and abroad. Prior to the public history movement, a similar number of Museum Studies programs were spreading. Collectively, academic programs ready hundreds of new EHPs for entry into the field each year.

To better understand these pathways, AASLH has been working with the National Council on Public History, American Historical Association, and Organization of American Historians. Our joint task force is assessing how the training offered by public history Master's programs aligns with

the types of skills that history institutions say they need in new employees. Our task force also is surveying recent graduates of public history programs about their career experiences so far.

Having fulfilling jobs for well-trained new colleagues is one thing. Being ready for their new ideas is another. I do think AASLH and all its fellow associations are eager to make changes. AASLH's strategic goals—history relevance, inclusiveness, creativity and experimentation,

sustainability and transparency, and responsiveness—certainly aim to be transformative.

One idea I hear EHPs saying is something on which all of us should agree: we must value history work and workers. A mentor of mine told me a long time ago: if historians don't respect their own labor by assigning a worthy dollar amount to their time, they erode the field. I would add that we compound our problems when we don't value the work of our newer colleagues—for example, through low starting salaries and poorly constructed internships. The work we do at all levels of the history community matters. That's ultimately what we are saying when we engage in history advocacy. We want county government, state funders, Congress, the media, and the public to value what we do collectively. Making this case is why AASLH is here and why we will continue to promote the relevance of history.



John
John Dichtl

*We must
value
history
work and
workers.*

Inclusive Historian's Handbook

In a new collaboration with the National Council on Public History and an editorial team of public history leaders, AASLH is helping to develop and promote the *Inclusive Historian's Handbook*. Born digital and free to use, this reference resource will offer a critical tool to help public history practitioners make their work more equity-focused and inclusive. Publication will begin by fall 2018 on topics ranging from Accessibility, Heritage Tourism, and Collaborative Practice, to Latino History, Intersectionality, Material Culture, and Public Folklore. The handbook will provide key insights, concrete examples, and practical wisdom to a range of public history professionals working to improve inclusive historical practice.

Co-editors of the project are William S. Walker, the Cooperstown Graduate Program (SUNY Oneonta); Modupe Labode, Associate Professor of History and Museum Studies, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis; and Robert Weible, State Historian of New York emeritus. Advisory Committee members include: Sheila Brennan, Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media; Aleia Brown, Michigan State University, #MuseumsRespondtoFerguson; Bill Bryans, Oklahoma State University; Priya Chhaya, National Trust for Historic Preservation; Yolanda Chavez Leyva, University of Texas, El Paso; Allison Marsh, University of South Carolina; Denise Meringolo, University of Maryland Baltimore County; Ashley Rogers, Whitney Plantation; Julia Rose, Homewood Museum, Johns Hopkins University; Kimberly Springle, Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives; Gretchen Sullivan Sorin, Cooperstown Graduate Program (SUNY Oneonta); Jessie Swigger, Western Carolina University; Chris Taylor, Minnesota Historical Society; and Amy H. Wilson, Editor, *Encyclopedia of Local History*.

Advocacy through the National Coalition for History

The National Coalition for History (NCH) is a consortium of fifty organizations advocating on federal legislation and regulatory issues affecting historians, archivists, teachers,

AASLH thanks the following individuals for their leadership as members of the **AASLH LEGACY SOCIETY**.

The Legacy Society provides AASLH members an opportunity to donate to the endowment via estate planning.

Ms. Sylvia Alderson*
Winston-Salem, NC

Anonymous

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Franklin, TN

Mr. Robert M. & Ms. Claudia H. Brown
Missoula, MT

Mr. & Mrs. Charles F. Bryan Jr.
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Las Cruces, NM

Mr. Jim & Ms. Janet Vaughan
Washington, DC

Mr. George L. Vogt
Portland, OR

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AASLH News

researchers, and other stakeholders. For the past three years, AASLH has had a seat on the NCH Board. Priorities for the NCH include federal funding for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH); the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS); the National Archives and Records Administration, including the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC); the National Parks Service; the Smithsonian Institution; the Library of Congress; and the declassification of federal records.

As of this writing, the Senate has not brought any appropriations bills to the floor for the FY2018 federal budget. Both the House and Senate appropriations bills are still in play, and NCH continues its efforts with House and Senate contacts to improve funding for key agencies. Although the White House had slated NEH, IMLS, and NHPRC for elimination, both the House and Senate have maintained them at level funding.

NCH has also been advocating for history education. On behalf of coalition members, NCH submitted formal comments last fall to the Department of Education requesting that history be included along with civics education in prioritizing how discretionary (competitive) grants made by the Department are awarded. NCH pointed out that “employability skills” (such as critical thinking, interpersonal skills, and organizational skills) which the Department prioritizes, are fostered by historical thinking and activities.

In cooperation with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, NCH also organized its member organizations, including AASLH,

to support the Senate’s version of legislation affecting the Federal Historic Tax Credit. The major tax reform bill signed by the president on December 22, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, kept the Senate’s approach, which sets the historic tax credit at 20 percent, but requires it be taken over five years instead of all at once as currently. Working with the American Alliance of Museums on legislation (S.2271) to reauthorize the Institute for Museum and Library Services will be a priority for NCH in 2018.

Museums Advocacy Day

Members of the AASLH Council, AASLH President John Dichtl, and External Relations Coordinator John Marks will be joining hundreds of colleagues from across the country at the 2018 Museums Advocacy Day (MAD), February 26-27, in Washington, D.C. Organized by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), this two-plus-day event is a powerful way



to support history organizations and their visitors and to press the issues impacting museums. Last year, museum advocates hit the hill in record numbers.

Whether or not you can go this year or next, every member of AASLH should consider attending someday. Advocacy Day is a thoroughly rewarding form of professional development for participants. The policy briefings, group discussions, workshops, networking, and ultimately the face-to-face visits to Capitol Hill offices position participants to be better advocates at the national level as well as locally. AAM has posted a long list of resources at aam-us.org/advocacy/resources to build advocacy skills; learn how Congress works; make the case for our field; and speak up for your museum at the federal, state, and local levels. To make the case for history, there also is help in the “Value of History” statement from the History Relevance folks at historyrelevance.com.

It is important for all public officials (local, state, and national) to know about the vital work history organizations do to educate the general public and the role your institution plays in a democratic and civil society. Encounters with history make citizens more thoughtful about the decisions they make and the consequences of those



John Dichtl, AASLH President and CEO and Bethany Hawkins, Chief of Operations, at Museums Advocacy Day 2017.

decisions. That is why AASLH sponsors, advocates, and lobbies on behalf of state and local history at the national level through strategic partnerships with other organizations and at important events like Museums Advocacy Day.

Update on the History Relevance Initiative

AASLH continues to play a leading role within the History Relevance initiative—a broad coalition of historians and museum professionals working to rebrand history as something not just “nice,” but essential. Since 2014, this collaborative effort has helped change the way history museums and organizations talk about the value and impact of their work. More than 200 organizations have endorsed the History Relevance “Value of History” statement, which highlights seven distinct ways history is essential, and have begun integrating its language into their work. Through these efforts, the History Relevance initiative has begun cultivating a critical mass of people and institutions talking about history in similar ways and making the case to the public about why our work matters.

AASLH plays an essential role in both facilitating and amplifying the initiative’s work. We’ve carved out space for History Relevance activities at our Annual Meeting, including panels, roundtable discussions, and major meetings of the group’s steering committee. We’re planning webinars and workshops with other History Relevance



American Association for State and Local History

Steering Committee members for the History Relevance initiative during a meeting at the National Air and Space Museum.

AASLH News

partners to help spread the message about the value of history to our members and beyond. AASLH has also taken the lead on pursuing grant funds for History Relevance to develop a community conversations series, to research public perceptions of history,

and to develop common metrics of impact for organizations to employ in their evaluations. We continue to make the relevance of history central to our work!

AASLH Welcomes New Education and Service Coordinator

In November, Natalie Flammia replaced former Education and Service Coordinator Amber Mitchell, who is now the Public Engagement and Community Programs Coordinator at the National World War II Museum in New Orleans. A native of New York, Natalie holds a Master of Library and Information Science with a concentration in Archives Management from Simmons College, and a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Spanish from Wake Forest University. Prior to joining AASLH, Natalie worked as an



Natalie Flammia

archivist for several private collections and interned at the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville.

Sylvia Farrell Alderson



In Memoriam 1930 - 2017

Sylvia Farrell Alderson passed away November 14, 2017 in Taneytown, Maryland. She was a generous donor to AASLH whose major gift in 1997-2004 laid the foundation of AASLH's endowment by inspiring matching donations from other individuals. Sylvia worked for decades as a nurse and was actively involved with art and music organizations as a dedicated volunteer and advocate. Sylvia's husband, William T. Alderson Jr., was director of AASLH for fourteen years, brought its offices to Nashville in 1964, and left it with a budget ten times larger and 150 percent more members when he stepped down from the position in 1978.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2017

50

New members welcomed

Leadership in History Awards given

18

People served by Continuing Education events

Books published

1,012

Members enrolled in StEPs

Annual meeting participants

832

New members welcomed

2,351

People served by Continuing Education events

900

Members enrolled in StEPs

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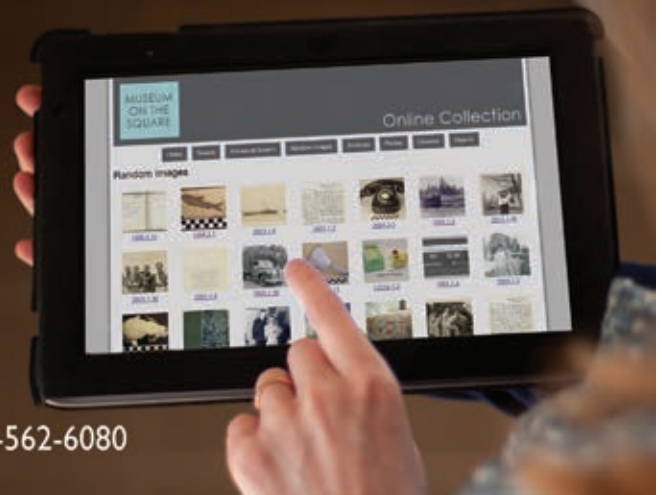


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