

Anthony P. Curtis, Exhibitions Project Specialist, Kentucky Historical Society

Following graduation from Marshall University in the summer of 2005 with a master's degree in U.S. History, and following a brief stint as an Executive Search Consultant and recognizing that I did not want to attend law school, I began applying for jobs in the history field. After a six month process, I obtained an interview with the Kentucky Historical Society (KHS) and was not hired for the position I had applied, but was offered my first position in the public history field as the Project Historian for the Kentucky Lincoln Heritage Trail project, a nine-month, full-time interim position. This project was a collaborative effort between the KHS and the Kentucky Heritage Council, and a part of the much larger Kentucky Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commemoration. Thus, in May 2007, I began my first foray into the world of public history, away from the world of academia I had grown so comfortable with, especially during my two year stint as an Adjunct Faculty member at both my alma maters, Morehead State University and Marshall University.

I was then offered a twelve-month, full-time contract position at KHS, through the non-profit foundation arm of KHS, as a Project Assistant for multiple projects. My experience with the Lincoln Trail project made for an easy transition to Lincoln exhibition projects that were currently under development at KHS, where I worked closely with Project Historian Darrell Meadows, Ph.D., to create two touch-screen interactive elements ("AbeSpace" and "Dealing with Kentucky") for our bicentennial traveling exhibition, "Beyond the Log Cabin: Kentucky's Abraham Lincoln." I also worked to develop, research, and implement the online exhibition version of "Beyond the Log Cabin" (<http://history.ky.gov/kylincoln>), which is an expanded version of the traveling exhibition and available to a much larger audience. Online exhibition work has remained a focus of my job at KHS.

Since the end of Lincoln exhibition work, and transitioning my work to three other projects, I became a full-time, state employee at KHS, with benefits and retirement, in January 2008, as an Exhibitions Project Specialist on the Museums, Collections & Exhibitions (MC&E) team. My work has since focused on three projects, the first of which we recently completed, "Kentucky Military Treasures: Selections from the Kentucky Historical Society Collections." I worked with Bill Bright, Lead Curator of the exhibition, almost simultaneously researching, developing, and implementing an online exhibition (<http://history.ky.gov/military>) and gallery exhibition at KHS. Both of these projects were completed and launched in the fall of 2009. This online exhibition is driven by a Filemaker database, in the same fashion as the Lincoln online exhibition. I have since moved into the research and development process for Kentucky Horse Industry Initiative (set to launch in Fall 2010) and Civil War Sesquicentennial projects (beginning rollout in 2011). The projects will include the development of Museums-To-Go panels, display cases/exhibits/exhibitions, and in the case of the Civil War Sesquicentennial, the development of an exhibition in our HistoryMobile, a forty-five foot tractor trailer.

In addition to my current exhibition duties I am involved in many facets of collections work at KHS. I am also involved with several professional organizations, including sitting on the board of the Kentucky Association of Teachers of History as the Public Historian representative. I think the best phrase to describe my introduction in to the field of public history is "**BAPTISM BY FIRE!**"

In evaluating my experience in public history at KHS I think that the work has been very positive, yet challenging, frustrating, and rewarding all at the same time. The environment also has proved to be constructive, supportive, welcoming, but also I have experienced rejection and challenges from colleagues who perceive new direction and young professionals as a threat to themselves and the traditional, stagnant nature of an organization. KHS is a very dynamic working environment, where you are encouraged to bring informed discussion to the table, especially if takes the

organization in a new and innovative direction. In a lot of cases it is much like sitting around a graduate seminar table, where new professional can help mold the direction of the organization.

However, coming to the field of public history, without traditional public history training, I found, for the most part, most of my colleagues very welcoming and willing to show me different skill sets related to exhibition development, writing skills for different audiences, and collections and curatorial work. Public History programs were in the developmental stages during my time as an undergraduate and graduate student. However, my supervisor, Marilyn Zoidis, who until recently was the Assistant Director of KHS and the Director of the MC&E team, was a great mentor to young professionals, encouraging and teaching us the skill sets of the profession.

However, my path through academia, trained as a social historian of the late nineteenth, early twentieth century, has not curtailed my employment. I think my background has aided my ability to be gainfully employed at KHS and within the public history field. My background in academia, as a student and faculty member, in conjunction with my background in banking/finance and as an executive search consultant, has better prepared and positioned me for future leadership roles within such organizations as KHS and in any future organizations I may work. A diverse background with real-life experience in different fields is only an asset to any organization. With my current position at KHS, my strong research and analytical background has been an added plus, after all I do work at an HISTORICAL society and within the public HISTORY field, not at a “heritage institution.” My observations of other recent graduates and new professionals, who have degrees from public history programs, do not have the research skills and understanding of historical methodology needed for the field. I think the traditional history master’s degree prepares new professionals in a much stronger foundation in research. These skills are a MUST for anyone engaging in exhibition and collections work, and realistically working in any aspect of an historical society. Two additional areas where it is of particular importance are the archives and education.

A skill set that I am looking to develop, along with a few of my colleagues at KHS, is an understanding of history education pedagogy, which can only help to inform exhibition work and interactive experiences for our visitors. Knowing how to engage your audiences appropriately and understand how different groups learn, especially school children (of which is a large audience for KHS), we can only increase visitation, better serve teachers, and increase education and historical literacy within the historical society setting.

Janna Bennett

So far in my professional museum life I’ve worked part-time as a collections manager for a small historical society and three different positions at a large children’s museum. To begin in order, I first worked for The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis as a part-time gallery educator while completing an undergraduate certificate in museum studies at IUPUI (Indiana University Purdue University at Indianapolis) in 1999. (At the time, a graduate degree was not yet available.) The gallery educator position and concurrent internship in collections were valuable introductions to the field. The educator position paid minimum wage and I supplemented my income with another part-time job with better pay. During this time I was fortunate enough to afford being a full-time student and thus had health insurance.

I consider my next job as part-time collections manager for the Lake Forest-Lake Bluff Historical Society (outside Chicago, IL) my first professional job. I held the position for two years between 2001 and 2003. While the position paid generously considering its part-time status, I would not

have been able to make ends meet without the second income and insurance of my husband. I felt the position was important enough for the experience and my resume that I continued to commute from Indianapolis for the final year since I had not yet found a comparable position in Indiana. Overall, my experience at Lake Forest-Lake Bluff Historical Society was very positive. The organization had the funds for one conference a year and I was able to write a grant to attend the Campbell Center for Historic Preservation Studies for basic coursework in collections care.

Finally, after a year of commuting to work in the Chicago area, a position opened up in Indianapolis. I was a strong candidate for the position back at The Children's Museum of Indianapolis collections department due to a previous internship in 1999. I began as department assistant in 2003. The position entailed administrative work as well as functioning as assistant registrar. After a year an American curator left. I was chosen to fill the position.

I've been a curator for the American collection for five years at The Children's Museum of Indianapolis. Until this budget crisis, I've been lucky to have monies to travel for one conference per year. The museum pays for professional associations and books required for research. Throughout my tenure I've been able to assume increasing responsibility in exhibits and managing part-time catalogers. The position has been demanding but supportive in my quest for additional education. I have completed coursework for a Masters in Public History (also at IUPUI). All that remains is a thesis. At work, however, I have reached a plateau. The senior American curator is unlikely to leave anytime soon. If I would like to be a director of a small museum or historical society, how do I gain additional leadership and fiscal experience to merit the promotion? How can I prove myself worthy of a jump to a smaller institution with more responsibility?

I have been lucky to have resources available to me regionally in Indianapolis and Chicago – namely a museums studies and public history programs and the Campbell Center. These opportunities have allowed me to retool for the profession at various times of my life. The Museum Studies certificate gave me a basic philosophical understanding of the philosophical and practical underpinnings of museums. The internship experience led me to further look to work in collections.

My public history degree has allowed me to further hone my museum skills including thinking critically about the role of museums and exhibits to communicate the past to the general public. I have also gained an understanding of the main trends and issues in historical thought and the many dimensions of public history. This has been crucial to my everyday work as a curator. It allows me to “hang my hat” on major miles stones while incorporating new learning and local events.

My experience, thus far, has been very museum centric. While I'm thankful for the experiences I've had, I have less experience with oral history or other types of historical work that make up the spectrum of public history. I have used my internship experiences during my public history degree to try to address this by working for a home tour doing title and architectural research as well as working for an oral history project.

Not everyone can or should do the part time school, full time work option. That being said, it has mostly worked for me. If I'd had the ability to travel to another spot for graduate school and go full-time, I'm sure my experience would be quite different. I would have liked to explore more digital content production and website management. The ability to use the web and publishing layout tools is becoming increasingly important in this digital age.

I still struggle with how do I juggle the time serious scholarship takes and is demanded by the historical profession with the lightning fast world of YouTube and Facebook? Each repeated

experience – additional exhibits and programs make me a better curator and expand the body of knowledge I have at my finger tips. Yet, connecting youth of tomorrow with history continues to be a tall order in a fast paced world with lots of competition for visitor's attention. We're still in the midst of a digital revolution; those of us working today have not grown up with the digital realities of the current and future generations. It is our task to make history come alive to new generations of citizens who value different things than generations of the past. Antique collectibles are from the 1980s, not the pioneer artifacts of previous generations. Creativity, a willingness to adapt and change, a solid understanding of the history of the Americas and the world are crucial to engaging new generations of visitors.

Mariko Ehrhart

1. In December 2008, I graduate from my History Master's program. It took me two months find a job. While I was looking for a job in the Public History field, I worked part time at a small restaurant. At work I had read an article in one of the Bay Area's Japanese American newspapers about this Historical Society, which was working on creating a new museum on San Francisco's Presidio. I thought "WOW" what an amazing project to get in on from the ground up.

I decided to call the organization and asked if they were hiring. I was told to send in my resume to the director. I received a call that turned into a phone interview. At the end of the phone conversation, I was asked to come up to San Francisco for a face to face interview. The director was an hour late to the interview. I received an email offer from the director to join the organization at nine pm, expecting me to come in the next morning. I was frustrated that I was asked to come in the next day because I was scheduled to work at the restaurant the next afternoon. Again, she was an hour late on my first day of work.

2. I worked for a small non profit historical society. I was employed from late February till was let go of in August. I was hired as the Program Assistant. There were three other staff members all part time except for the director. Also, there were two full time volunteers who came in about four days a week. I worked five days a week for 6 hours a day.

I was thrown into the position without any introduction to the organization like its history and the types of programs they did. For the first two weeks, I commuted from San Francisco to my job part time job in San Jose because my boss wanted me to start work right away. Then most days I commuted by train and when I really needed to I drove my car. If I drove my car the commute takes about three hours, but if I took the train my commute took me about five hours daily. So the number of hours I commuted weekly almost equalled the number of hours I worked. I would try to make it out of the office at five pm, but would not make it out of the office until 5:15-5:30. We were in a meeting that last almost till six pm, and she said "oh it late, you should leave," but she kept on talking while I was trying to get off the office.

On a daily basis I felt over worked and felt like I was being treated unfairly. She would throw five different things at my expecting me to get them done immediately. I had little familiarity with doing like making flyers, working with Microsoft Publisher, and Apple software called Quark and expected me to get it done fast. I was treated like a salary employee when I was a hourly employee. She wanted me to read for the job and do work on my commute, when I felt it was my time. At times she wanted me to stay and work late, but then she didn't want me going over my weekly hours.

During the first few months, I spent my time cleaning up and organizing papers that were left by my predecessor. The director had the boxes of papers on the floor because she was constantly using them as a reference. They were on the floor because she didn't have enough filing cabinets and they were easier to get to on the floor. I worked hard clean up the office and felt my work was under appreciated. When I got there she didn't have a desk for me to do work at. I had to get my own desk by organizing an office move.

The director also violated workers right laws and she had no problem doing that because her main goal was to save as much money by any means possible. I was never paid on time because if my pay check was over 500 dollars, it required two signatures. She would not pay overtime, and wanted me to fudge my timesheet so it would not reflect me working over my allotted hours.

One day she said she wanted to talk to me after work, I had a hunch that was going to let me go. I knew when I met her, she was going to tell me was letting me go, but then she said I was to stay for two more weeks. The whole time during the conversation where she let go, I felt like my skills as a professional were being degraded. The one thing she said that hurt the most to me was that she felt I had falsified my resume. I feel that I did not falsify my resume but that she had misinterpreted some of things I said during the face to face interview. During my last two weeks, she ignored me and only spoke to me to ask me about for the big event happening that weekend. I felt very uncomfortable being in the office.

3. I feel that my overall experience at the historical society was negative. Most of the time, the work environment was unsupportive from the director. Every day I went home exhausted because of the commute and doing things around the office. She was not willing to teach/instruct me on what my responsibilities were and software programs that she wanted me to use. She would put off meeting with me till the last minute and even then she still not sure of what was going on. I was treated like a salary employee when I an hourly employee. Some days I was not able to grab lunch until two pm because she had pulled me into a meeting. Very often she would go without eating or drinking anything because of that she was forgetful that her employees need to stop for lunch.

I only learned a few useful skills. I learned how to use Publisher a bit, but still do not understand how to use some of the advanced tools in the program. Another positive occurrence was that she sent me to two professional development courses, but I don't think she sent me to the right ones that would help the organization. I was sent to a project management and volunteer management course, but it may have been better to send me to desktop publishing course. A good lesson I learned was to be cautious with whom in the organization you talk to on your feelings about the organization and where.

I wish my boss would have been more supportive and understanding of my being a recent graduate. I wish my boss would have listened more and been more supportive of the work I did. I understand that my boss was concerned about her organization, need to be more in tuned with her employees and their concerns.

4. I think my education gave me the research skills I need for the job. I think my degree has helped me to find a job. I think having the MA letters may have helped me get a job. I do not think there are too many graduates with similar qualifications.

5. If heritage intuitions especially those that are non-profit institutions should give interns an introductions to how non-profits work. Heritage institutions look outside their institutions for new hires, willing to train and inform their new employees how their institutions work.

6. I feel public historians need to be equipped with web building skills, knowledge of design programs like Indesign or Adobe Photoshop, and desktop publishing programs. I think desktop publishing skills are important skills and knowledge for a public historian because making flyer and other products for the job. Today's public historians should be to wear as many hats as possible and able to handle it all.

Vanessa Macias, *Las Villitas: Neighborhoods & Shared Memories Exhibit Project Manager, El Paso Museum of History*

My first experience in the Public History field came while I was a Master's student in History at the University of New Mexico, 2002-2004. My thesis advisor offered me an opportunity to work with an Albuquerque neighborhood association. The internship involved arranging the association's files related to a large-scale urban renewal project in the 1970's and conducting a small set of oral history interviews. A few months into the project, I decided to write my thesis on Chicano urban communities using this particular neighborhood to illustrate how community networks endured while undergoing immense changes. The thesis and internship incorporated the more traditional historical research and writing training of my Master's program while also requiring other skills that my program did not cover, like knowing how to work with people who felt "ownership" over a certain history. This experience made me want to learn more about how historians can work with the public, but this particular graduate program offered little assistance in exploring this interest. After completing my program in summer 2004, I moved home to El Paso to teach U.S. History survey courses at the local community college and search, in vain, for employment in Public History.

After teaching for three years, I decided to pursue a second Master's at New Mexico State University (NMSU) with a specific focus on Public History. I believed that this choice provided me with a way to become familiar with Public History as a field (both nationally and regionally) and work with the program's director. Plus, the program would help boost my Public History experience on my CV and the internship requirement would place me within a local museum or historical site. When it came time to secure an internship in early spring 2008, I contacted the education curator and director from the El Paso Museum of History. After a few times of volunteering at museum events and discussing my thesis research and experience in Albuquerque, the director asked me to conduct research for a grant application seeking funding for an exhibit about El Paso neighborhoods. I would be included in the grant as a project manager, which we thought would basically be a paid internship. The museum received notification that it was awarded the grant in late summer 2008. I have been project manager for this exhibit-in-development since September 2008.

I open my case statement with this lengthy background because it encompasses two elements that I think is common among Public Historians: finding employment and/or projects "by-chance" and transitioning between academic-oriented graduate programs and Public History. Perhaps "by-chance" is not quite accurate since I have worked hard to establish and maintain contacts in many areas related to my interests. I have also worked with key advisors/individuals in the academic and Public History fields that have been able to point me in the right direction. On the other hand, "by-chance" feels about right when I consider how many times I feel like I am in a thick fog where I hear about opportunities, but don't ever really figure out how to locate them. This feeling points to weaknesses in both of my graduate programs in preparing its graduate students for the job search. I hope this group can explore how graduate programs can better prepare their students for the sometimes harsh realities of the workforce.

My current position is on a yearly renewed, contract basis and funded by two grants. I work at a municipal museum and am technically a city employee. This situation makes many city resources available to the project; however, it also limits me in terms of how I interact with community/historical organizations and institutions and can potentially limit the exhibit's ability to present and explore aspects of El Paso's neighborhoods. Since I am a contract employee, I am sheltered from the ups and downs of the city government system; in other ways, I am more easily dispensable and do not receive any benefits ranging from insurance to travel funds. As I mentioned before, this position was initially conceived as a paid internship, but the extensive project parameters and the museum's small staff (four administrative positions, two administrative assistants, and a handful of operations personnel) make me primarily responsible for launching the entire exhibit. It is a part-time position with full-time, salary size responsibilities (without the salary of course).

With all of this said, my current position is providing me with many valuable experiences and has been a very positive experience in terms of professional and personal growth. Being the one responsible for developing several key aspects of the project requires me to reach out to other museum/historic sites to learn about their projects and keep up with technological developments. Collaboration and partnerships are also happening locally, which requires me to figure out how to skillfully work through existing politics, alliances, and red-tape. The museum staff has always been supportive of this project; however, they are quite overwhelmed with many other responsibilities most of the time. I have experienced resistance from the staff to incorporating more interactive elements into the project. I think this comes from being unfamiliar with these types of elements, past negative experiences, and concerns about maintenance and cost over time (the last three being rather understandable). How do new professionals introduce new, sometimes innovative, ways of approaching Public History in a way that's accessible to their staff?

Although the museum staff is pleased with my work, my position might still be eliminated once the exhibit opens in late summer 2010 and grant funding ends. Luckily, I will be able to take many of the skills I learned through coordinating this project and apply them to other projects. Yet I find myself again facing that thick fog of not knowing where, even how, to secure another position that reflects my expanded professional experience in both responsibilities and salary. In other words, how can I avoid making a lateral move? Or is a lateral move all new professionals can expect in this economic climate?

My reference to personal growth is an aspect of this discussion that should be addressed as recent graduates and new professionals. Weighing options and making decisions about a career inevitably impacts one's personal life. One is forced to prioritize and make concessions, and, ideally, this leads to a better understanding of what one wants to do. Even in moments of panic and doubt, these past few years have shown me that Public History is the profession I am meant to pursue.

Employers should understand that many new professionals share this sense of drive for Public History and should help channel that passion in constructive ways. I look forward to hearing how this can happen through this working group's discussions.

Laura McDowell

After receiving my undergraduate degree in History and Museum Studies and my master's in Public History, I did not anticipate too many problems finding a full-time job after graduation. During

college and grad school, I worked and volunteered at several museums in an attempt to build up a strong resume stacked with quality experience. That experience included a curatorial summer internship at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, two years of volunteer work at the Michigan State University Museum, another internship at the Frances Willard House Museum, volunteer work Women and Leadership Archives, and part-time employment at the Loyola University of Chicago Archives and Special Collections, and the Kenilworth Historical Society, and the Chicago Jewish Archives.

While carrying full-time student status for all six years of college and grad school and being involved in a number of student organizations, I was consistently juggling responsibilities at one or two part-time jobs as well as volunteer work. While this busy schedule was stressful at times (especially when I was employed at two part-time jobs totaling 35 hours a week during my last three semesters of graduate school), I was happy to do it in order to get more experience. My undergraduate Museum Studies program strongly emphasized the importance of gaining on-the-job experience before going on the market in the museum field, and the volunteer work and employment offered me very rewarding opportunities.

I was lucky after finishing graduate school that I did not have any time unemployed. As I remained employed part-time as Museum Assistant at the Kenilworth Historical Society and as the Graduate Assistant at the Loyola University of Chicago Archives, I had employment assurance at least for the summer after graduation, as Loyola could not continue to employ me after that time.

I began my job search four months before my May 2009 graduation from the Public History program at Loyola University of Chicago. Because of the economic stresses at the time, many of the museums in the Chicago area were not hiring or, even worse, were laying off existing staff. Entering the job market at such a bleak period for museums and non-profits was a frightening prospect. I sent applications out for every posted job I was qualified for and did have a few interviews, but the job market had become so competitive that I did not receive a job offer until April and even then, it was for part-time work. The Newberry Library hired me as a part-time Program Assistant (20 hours per week) and I was able to immediately transition into that job after graduation to replace my work at the LUC Archives.

I interviewed for and was offered another part-time job (8-10 hours a week) at the Edgewater Historical Society in May and I accepted the position to help ease my finances. I am the collections manager at EHS, a very small museum where I am the only staff member. While the job has its frustrations, I entered the museum field to work in collections and heading the EHS collections has been an excellent educational experience. I am able to set my own hours so that the job can accommodate my schedule, which has been especially helpful since my work schedule has changed since I began working there.

I continued searching for a full-time job or another part-time job to replace my work at the Kenilworth Historical Society, which was unable to offer me enough hours each week so I could be financially secure. However, I continued working there through May. In June, a friend from my graduate school classes who I had collaborated on frequently for class projects told me that a part-time job was opening up at the Mitchell Museum of the American Indian and that I should send her my resume. I was offered that job and began working there part-time (25 hours per week) as the Resource and Development Coordinator. While fundraising and grantwriting are not the reasons I got into the museum field, I was still thrilled that I found another job in my field at a time when jobs are scarce.

Currently, I still work all three of these jobs each week. I'm at the Mitchell Museum of the American Indian Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, and most Sundays; the Newberry Library Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays; and the Edgewater Historical two nights per week. This brings my total work hours per week to at least 53, although I have been frequently putting in additional hours on a volunteer basis at the Mitchell Museum, my primary employer.

Working a schedule at multiple institutions is necessary right now as jobs in the museum field remain few and far between. While it is extremely stressful at times, especially considering my commute since I do not own a car, it is not only necessary but also rewarding. The hours are necessary as I have hefty bills to pay and the cost of living in Evanston, Illinois is high.

While working part-time is certainly not desired after graduate school as it does not create a steady income and leaves me without health insurance, working these jobs instead of finding a full-time position outside of the museum field has been rewarding because each job offers me something interesting and important to do every day. At the Edgewater Historical Society, I have reduced their six-year backlog by about 40% over the last eight months. At the Newberry Library, I am currently administering a National Endowment for the Humanities summer institute for college and university faculty. Most rewarding of all, I have worked my way from Resource and Development Coordinator to a curatorial position at the Mitchell Museum of the American Indian and am the co-curator of a major temporary exhibit on the art and culture of the Northwest Coast which runs from January 23-June 13, 2010.

To be sure, the schedule and juggling involved in holding three part-time public history jobs is stressful, but being involved in a field I love instead of working outside the field at a full-time position has been a wonderful experience.

Employment/Experience Opportunities for Recent Graduates and New Professionals **Li Na, University of Massachusetts Amherst**

In Western Europe and North America came the initial awakening of urban preservation: old buildings and historic fabrics are previous resources to express and define history, to sustain the spirit of the city and cultural identity of its inhabitants, so they should be preserved. After extensive travel to major historic cities in Asia, I realized that preservation dealt with fundamentally the same old issue: adopting the built environment to the changing politics, economy, culture, and technology often requires the removal or demolition of the old urban fabric. The notion that the city and its building required replacement by something more fitting for the time, is not unique to Asian countries; it lies at the root of modern culture across the globe.

Strangely, witnessing urban destructions at such a magnitude in my own culture did not disappoint me. Instead, my passion for historic preservation turned into a life-long commitment in 2006, and I made a conscious decision to move to the United States for my doctorate study in urban planning and historic preservation that year. The decision opened up my intellectual horizon in a whole brand-new way, yet my arc of vision remains the same: an almost in-born respect for culture, history, and a dogged determination to preserve historic architecture and landscapes. In the subsequent years in Massachusetts, I have studied with Dr. David Glassberg and Dr. Marla Miller, and become one of the first recipients of the Graduate Certificate in Public History at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 2009.

Now when I am looking out for professional opportunities in public history, I have reflected upon the journey that I have embarked on in my mid-twenties, but in a very different cultural context.

My public history education: an experiential learning

Prior to my intellectual journey in North America, I have never heard of the idea of “public history”, much less “a shared authority”. Yet I am miraculously salvaged by public history: to make the past relevant to a broad spectrum of publics seems to be the most efficient way of preserving history. My public history education in Massachusetts turns out to be a wonderful experiential learning, a good balance of theories and practices, just as what Theodore J. Karamanski advocated two decades ago, “true experiential education should not be merely pragmatic, but experimental and broadening”.¹ Two public history field projects in 2008 -- one a team work, and another on my own --illustrated this well.

The Hadley Barn Survey (with Hadley Historical Commission) project examined, interpreted, and evaluated the barns and other agricultural buildings Hadley, Massachusetts. The field survey focused on the structures located outside of the historic districts, to understand how the individual barn design, orientation, uses changing over time, reflect the regional identity and shape the community character. The in-depth interviews with selective barn owners intended to interpret the humane dimension of how the agricultural landscapes have evolved, altered, and sustained. The resulting website presented images and map locations for close to one hundred barns in the community’s least-documented neighborhood. Based on the findings, the project team suggested policy implications in preserving the unique qualities of rural landscapes in the area.

Another project about landscape and site interpretation took place at Emily Dickinson Homestead, Amherst, Massachusetts. This project was an interpretive program for families with one or two children in the landscape audio tour at the Emily Dickinson Museum, Amherst, Massachusetts. Historic places boast big didactic potential; the information exuding from the sites becomes one of the most effective means for public to get in touch with history. Site interpretation is, above all things, an art, and art is, in some degree, teachable by capitalizing on sheer curiosity for the enrichment of the human mind and spirit. The overarching goal of this interpretive plan was to make the landscape audio tour more interactive with school children; the end product I have produced: four bookmarks (spring, summer, autumn, and winter).

Apart from the core public history courses and skills, I have carved out a special niche of my own: historic preservation. A wonderful experience is the project that I engaged in Historic Structures Investigation: Hill-Woody House, Lynchburg, Virginia, 2008. This field project was part of Thomas Jefferson’s Poplar Forest Architectural Restoration Field School 2008: the program provided hands-on training and knowledge of the rich complexity of details and issues found in the architectural restoration of historic properties. The major components included: theory and practice of museum quality restoration; architectural investigation & documentation; restoration construction; historic material analysis; masonry conservation; historical archaeology; historical interpretation. Working with other eight students from 8 states, I have learned not only the architectural restoration field skills, but also the kind of personality I envy. Robert Kelly expressed well, “it is the habits of mind and character that are the most important” and “...turning out a particular kind of person.”²

¹ T. J. Karamanski, "Experience and Experimentation - the Role of Academic Programs in the Public History Movement," *Public Historian* 9, no. 3 (1987). P. 139

² R. Kelley, "On the Teaching of Public History," *Public Historian* 9, no. 3 (1987). P. 41

Authority sharing: an entrepreneurial process

My training and experience in international business greatly expanded my horizon at the global scale: routinely negotiating business contracts and investigating automotive plants in different countries helped establish a global perspective in strategic thinking. A genuine cultural sympathy and a cross-cultural capability were also trained. The experience further provided a rich empirical base for my research in global management, especially social entrepreneurship, leadership, and urban policy making. The character, mentality, and skills that I have cultivated in business are translated and transformed, almost impeccably, in public history project management. Even the research part calls for being imaginative and innovative, through analyzing the documents which are not conveniently located and organized in the libraries or archives.

My current project exemplifies this entrepreneurial process. The study explores the reciprocal relationship between collective memory and the urban landscapes in the Kensington area, Toronto. It sets out to examine how memories have shaped the evolution of the built landscape of the area, and how sites of memory have continuously shaped its present and future. Furthermore, networking those sites can tell a collective story of Jewish communities, in other words, can reconnect social memory on an urban scale. This project assumes that each site is an intersection of political powers, cultural values, and religious beliefs. To tie the social history to its spatial representation helps understand and retain the social characteristics of the built environment. It will take a selective look at some significant historic landscapes whose traces remain, map those spaces, and connect them into a narrative path that follows the social and economic development of the area since the 1960s.

This process becomes a personal as well as a community journey of historic inquiry, which requires a highly participatory public process that builds on local historic narratives, such as storytelling and oral histories. The inspiration that I have gained from interviewing people who have resided or directly associated with the built landscapes involves an international significance: in so many parts of Asia, storytelling is commonly adopted to pass on knowledge or to share the memories. Providing venues for storytelling, therefore, may serve to highlight the different histories and their connections to the built form that are most meaningful for different groups. In this intergenerational transmission, oral histories remain an efficient way of engaging storytelling. With the help of Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling at Concordia University, I am using *Stories Matter*, an oral history software to analyze and archive the data from the field.

Now, what is out there?

What kind of opportunities are out there for me and other recent graduates? The job prospect seems uncertain. The employers are usually looking for things we do not sufficiently have, such as experience. Last year in Providence, I have had wonderful discussions with a few senior public historians, and I expect those discussions can carry on. Experienced public historians are our best resources: their mentoring could greatly benefit us. We will also need some practical guidance, or rather, a mentoring system supported by NCPH, on how to navigate through the job market, and find out our playfield.

In the long run, I expect to transplant field experience, skills, and most important, the idea of authority-sharing back to Asia, especially to places where civic dialogues are still at great peril, and public engagement is less grounded: The gap between the officials and the residents comes down to who has the *authority* to decide what is historically significant, and eventually what kind of history we, as professionals, are preserving.