

## **Kristen Luetkemeier**

I should confess that I match the spirit, more than the letter, of this working group's title. I currently hold three part-time jobs: one as a historian for a small planning company, and two teaching English to adult immigrants. At the same time, I am pursuing some personal projects related to my work as a historian and teacher. My daily schedule depends on each job's current needs and my preferences for the day and week. This flexibility is a defining characteristic of my current professional and personal life, and one with particular benefits and drawbacks.

I began the historian job in January of 2007. For two years, I worked full time contributing to resource surveys, National Register and local district and site designations, preservation plans, design guidelines, and statements of National Register eligibility and effect. I appreciated the chance to learn about and visit various communities, and was able to find classes and volunteer opportunities flexible enough to work with an erratic schedule at home in Nashville. I learned a good deal about the preservation profession and the development of some interesting communities, but missed having a sustained involvement with a particular mission.

At the beginning of 2009, I enrolled in a certification course for teaching English as a second language (ESL). I had done some volunteer literacy and English-language tutoring previously, and liked meeting students, hearing their stories, and learning about the mechanics of language. The course included good strategies and practical experiences, and following it I found jobs teaching three classes. One class meets twice a week and is composed of students with a variety of language and national backgrounds. Two classes meet only once a week and are for refugees from Burma. All are beginning level. I enjoy the interactions with students and contributing to their progress, but our lack of shared language makes in-depth conversation difficult.

Concurrent with these jobs, I am pursuing three independent projects. The first is to find and be hired for a full-time job that combines historical research with interpretation. The second is to pursue publication of some of my writing from graduate school. The third is the focus of the remainder of this paper: to create a series of short stories about sites in the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area to use as teaching tools in ESL classrooms.

The potential for overlap between historical interpretation and ESL instruction is ripe with possibilities. One personal frustration about my historian job is that I am largely disconnected from the broader audience that may or may not be using the historical products I produce, and that the production process is relatively constricted. In class, I remain involved with a comparably stable community of people for, at a minimum, several months at a time. Additionally, I am expected to use creative means to expose these people to new language and create opportunities for them to become proficient at understanding and using it. I am most effective as a teacher when I help enable students to successfully navigate their new surroundings, surroundings filled with social and cultural, as well as linguistic, aspects.

One method for ESL instruction is to use short stories or dialogs, paired with a word list and questions, to introduce new words and grammar. I like this method, because the stories provide contexts for new words and structures, and the questions and answers allow students to make personal connections with the material. The drawback is that many of the published stories

themselves are generic, employing fictional characters and scenarios. Creating stories focused on state history provides an opportunity to combine the history discipline with an audience of people looking to learn the dominant language and gain insight into their surroundings.

To balance my time while working on these stories, I treat them as options for leisure activities. Nurturing ties with family and friends is a priority for me, as is completing professional obligations well. My job search has become another important activity. In the time remaining, I work on the ESL story project when it suits me. My flexible approach comes with strengths and weaknesses.

The approach's weaknesses are not surprising. Its biggest weakness is that sometimes motivation and progress are scarce. Accompanying this, the possibility for guilt is ever present, because the project's scope is undefined enough to expand or contract into whatever time is available.

The strengths of the approach are also significant. My approach allows me to balance control with collaboration. Its process draws on and increases my existing knowledge. Ultimately, the project will result in a useful product.

The ESL story project provides a good balance of individual control and collaboration. Because I am choosing what parties to involve in the process and how to involve them, I am able to foster valued relationships with others in the field. I also do not anticipate the miscommunications or unexpressed expectations that sometimes accompany multi-party projects, enabling my time expenditures to be efficient and enjoyable. Controlling the scheduling and output enables me to engage with and enjoy the process when I choose to write.

My background in state history, historical methods, and English instruction gives me particular experience well suited to this project. Six years in Middle Tennessee, two and a half working explicitly with state and local history as a graduate assistant, park ranger, and preservation fellow, respectively, built my knowledge of relevant themes and particular events. This provided a strong starting point for the ESL story project. As with any research and writing process, working on the stories has and will continue to increase my knowledge of sites that I find particularly fascinating. The project also provides good excuses for field trips! My work with ESL curriculum gives me an understanding of the progression by which students gain English skills, enabling me to target content appropriately to the audience. I plan to ultimately provide public web-based access to the stories with a means for users to share their experiences with them. Ideally, this will provide a mechanism for me to gain commentary on the strengths and weaknesses of my work and enable me to improve on future efforts, and to learn about effective ways others use the material.

Finally, the result will be a useful product. Students engaging with this material will better understand both their new home and the English language, providing opportunities for richer engagements with their coworkers, supervisors, children, and neighbors, and helping to prepare them to meet personal or professional aims like attaining United States citizenship or helping their children with schoolwork. Though not strictly related to process, this combination of material and meaning is the aspect that I find most compelling about this project, and it works as a motivator for the process.

To gain insight from my experience with the ESL story project, others interested in independent history projects could consider the broad implications of elements of my process. A first and fundamental question was whether I had the time and expertise to make an independent project work, and how those two needs would affect a project. Since deciding I had a good idea and possessed adequate time and expertise, questions of self discipline, control versus collaboration, existing knowledge, and meaning factor heavily into my experience with process. Does self direction provide exciting opportunities to jump on, endless opportunities for avoidance, or something in between? (Might participation in something like a professional working group help minimize tendencies toward the avoidance end of the spectrum?) What are my preferences for working with others or as an individual, and how can I incorporate those preferences into an independent project? How can I tailor this project to use my existing knowledge and keep myself interested by adding to that knowledge? Am I going to end up with something that will be valued by anyone else? These have been my fundamental questions regarding the ESL story project.

**Off-Track, Multi-Track, and the Tenure Track: University Administration and Practicing History on the Side**  
**Anne Mitchell Whisnant, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill/Primary Source History Services**

My Situation

I finished my Ph.D. in History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1997. Since 2002, I have worked full-time in university administration, first at Duke University and now at UNC-CH. I published my revised dissertation in 2006 with the University of North Carolina Press as *Super-Scenic Motorway: A Blue Ridge Parkway History*, and this has opened many opportunities for ongoing professional historical work. These opportunities have grown since I became Director of Research, Communications, and Programs at the Office of Faculty Governance at UNC-Chapel Hill in 2006.

My main job now (garnering the majority of my earned income) is as an “EPA Non-Faculty” (at-will, professional) employee at UNC. I also have a five-year faculty appointment as Adjunct Associate Professor in the History Department. This courtesy appointment does not convey either faculty voting rights at the departmental or university level, or money, unless I am teaching.

Since my book came out, the amount of history I’m doing has grown dramatically. I am teaching one course a year, advising a major new digital history project that UNC Libraries is doing based on my book, doing a lot of public speaking, working on three National Park Service contract history studies, and serving on several nonprofit or professional committees and boards having to do with either public history or the National Parks. I spend on average 20-30 hours a week doing historical work. Yet I am not evaluated or paid by in the Office of Faculty Governance for any of this work; though it is tolerated and sometimes encouraged, it is very much an “add-on.”

Much of the history work is remunerative. The University pays me to teach, but payments for the National Park Service and other outside consulting and lecturing are channeled through the small consulting firm I set up with my husband David Whisnant in 2006. Retired from the University for nine years, David does perhaps 75% of the work on our paid projects, but I am heavily involved,

and this work is now generating, on average, annual income that is approximately 1/3 of my UNC salary. My work on the digital history project, as well as most of my nonprofit work, is unpaid.

### Positive Synergies

I receive much more support for my ongoing scholarly work at UNC than I did at Duke, but there is no question that being employed in the university sector has furthered my work as a professional historian in many ways. I have enjoyed benefits including: access to libraries and electronic resources; time off for research and writing; a stimulating intellectual environment; the ability to forge connections with other scholars and librarians interested in related work; a flexible work schedule with considerable autonomy; funding to attend professional history conferences; support for my adjunct faculty appointment in History and time for teaching a course of my choosing and design; exposure to university-based conversations about issues (curriculum, tenure and promotion, graduate education, digital scholarship) germane to the history profession; an institutional affiliation that is recognized and valued by others in the history profession and other outsider entities; encouragement and validation for my history work by many faculty and staff colleagues who know of it.

### Problems

No matter how much support and synergy are present, however, I have encountered problems in trying to pile an active career as a professional historian on top of a related, but not entirely compatible, day job. The university and its culture have imposed boundaries that have made it difficult for me to fully *integrate* my dual professional identities, to find and develop my voice and sense of myself as a professional, and to materially advance my growth as a historian. While everything I do is, in my mind, holistically interrelated, some things about the way the university is organized have forced me to keep my two worlds separate in ways that are confusing and painful. Why has this happened?

*I lack official standing on the faculty.* From a practical standpoint, the university is divided into faculty and staff. I am staff. My “adjunct” faculty status is considered tangential. I do not have a vote in faculty decision-making at either the departmental or university level; I do not have a voice in most faculty committee meetings and forums (many of which I regularly attend as the staff support); I am not recognized, rewarded, or promoted for the scholarly work I do; and I have no job security or guarantee of academic freedom.

*Staff never have the power, voice, or cultural capital within the university that faculty do.* The culture of the university reinforces the faculty/staff boundary by dictating appropriate roles for people in each. Faculty protests about administrative control aside, it is clear that *faculty* (especially full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty) still have the widest latitude of any university group with regard to the arenas in which it is deemed appropriate for them to speak, act, and wield influence. The most important administrators are those who have faculty appointments and rose through the faculty ranks. Non-faculty administrators (even those with Ph.D.s and active research agendas) are lumped together with “staff,” and we still must not subvert the boundaries or step into realms that are considered the purview of the faculty.

*Lack of official standing as “faculty” is enforced in informal and formal ways.* The boundaries that I must not cross have been marked in a number of ways:

- My supervisor asked me to remove “Ph.D.” and my adjunct faculty title from my email signature and to keep my work as a historian distinctly separate from my work in Faculty Governance.
- I was told that I should not speak in the meetings of the faculty committees that I staff. I offer only “informational” comments that issue from my knowledge of what is going on at the university and generally do not interject substantive comments that issue from my expertise as a practicing historian.
- I have been told that the “most important activity” of one of the main faculty committees that I staff is its regular dinners with the Chancellor, but I am not allowed to attend them, even though I participate in every other activity of this faculty committee.
- At Duke I was once told that I should never expect my specific scholarly interests to be incorporated into our institute’s programming; these suggestions were to come from faculty.
- At Duke, I was once told by a faculty supervisor that I should not mention my work about the Blue Ridge Parkway “unless somebody asks.”
- At Duke, I was denied a promised promotion and nearly fired after I spoke out (anonymously, under a pseudonym) in a *Chronicle of Higher Education* column about the status quandaries of Ph.D. staffers in universities. This happened within an institute that otherwise prided itself on lauding and protecting academic freedom and controversial “risky” statements by dissidents of various sorts.

*Lack of official standing as “faculty” inhibits practical attempts to get support for my work.* Not having (full-time) faculty status has hindered me in getting support for my largest unpaid project as a historian, and, ironically, the one that is most firmly based at the University: the large digital history project being done by the UNC Libraries based on my book. My non-faculty status makes me ineligible for the internal fellowships and scholarly leaves that normally support this kind of work, and I cannot take advantage for outside fellowships for which I might be eligible (e.g. from NEH) because I cannot take months off from my day job to accept a fellowship.

#### Solutions and strategies

I have managed these challenges in a number of ways:

- By creating a formalized, alternative institution – our small consulting firm – through which to conduct most (but not all) of my professional consulting/contract history work, especially that paid for by outside entities.
- By leveraging my adjunct faculty status to provide as much support as possible, including funding for participation in the annual NCPH meeting and a bureaucratic home for approvals of scholarly projects that cannot be completely disentangled from my University affiliation (grant applications and IRB forms related to the digital project and the OAH-sponsored NPS study I am chairing).
- By working with parts of the University less concerned about particulars of status (e.g. the Libraries).
- By taking on history projects that emanate from professional organizations (OAH, NCPH), the Park Service, and NGO-type nonprofits that appreciate and can benefit from my expertise, and for whom the specifics of my status at the university are less important than the content of my knowledge based on my record of publication and scholarly work.

## **Best Job in Monterey**

### **Jim Conway**

Working as a public employee gives one a sense of ownership to public events, activities and records that the public historian strives to capture for that important history they may someday intend to write. However, events, activities and record keeping requires use of time and energy most often at the expense of “doing history.” Balancing the day-to-day cultural and heritage workload of a small city with an extensive history requires prioritizing one’s schedule. With the official title of Museum and Cultural Arts Manager and the unofficial title of City Historian, I often find myself in the juxposition of what do I do next?

After nearly 21 years of working as a logistics manager for the Spreckels Sugar Company in the town of Spreckels, the facility closed in 1995. This closure was the opportunity I was seeking to pursue my passion for history and in 1997, I returned to graduate school. Although my original intent was to capitalize on my military history, I found that labor and cultural history had a close connection to my last 20 years of employment. Upon graduation in 1999, the City of Monterey opened a part-time position as a museum attendant and research assistant. I took the job although it paid a part time wage. I could see a huge up-side; the city was in the process of creating a military museum on the Presidio of Monterey and was looking for someone to oversee the project. It proved to be a good mix for my military history and because much of the Presidio was involved with the expansion of California, it gave me a broad base to work from.

Following the opening of the museum and developing a Master Plan for what is now the Lower Presidio Historic Park, I was approached to write a history of Monterey. Knowing I could not complete that while working 40 hours a week, I asked the City Manager if we could split the royalties based on time I spent on the book. He made me a better offer- it became part of my work assignment and the city was to receive all the royalties. My salary and benefits were going to be much more than the royalty. I still received the copyright and promoted the book.

A death in the department opened the door for more responsibility. Because of budget shortfalls following 9/11/2001, the city started reducing staff or not replacing them. I was assigned to be in charge of the city’s museums and artifacts. I started a new book on the subject of the 1849 Constitutional Convention which was held in Colton Hall. When the person in charge of cultural arts took a position with a respected art association, it was decided that art was part of the collections. And since most special cultural events were held in the historic buildings, events and collections fell under my purview. My management background from previous positions made it a natural progression for my job to be upgraded to management adding another level of administration and bureaucratic demands and taking away from practicing history. That leads us into working 9 to 5 while trying to practice history. The book is still in progress.

The Native People were here thousands of years prior to 1602 when the first Europeans arrived. The Spanish made Monterey the capital of Alta and Baja California and its port of

entry. The Californios during the Mexican period opened the area to trade and outside influences. The Americans seized it as part the Mexican American War and as a result, claimed 700,000 square miles for the United States. During the Gold Rush when a constitutional convention was needed, Monterey supplanted larger cities as that site. With an extensive history in military, fishing and canning, tourism, literature, and numerous cultural groups, coupled with its passion for preservation of its adobes, Monterey is a unique town in that it has many layers of history. Maximizing how I spend my time on historic questions that arise in my daily work helps me practice history at some level. Administrative demands can involve preservation issues, grant writing, collections management, personnel issues, budget, staff reports for commissions and city council to name a few. I strive to find the public history in each function. The most challenging part of the history process is finding the time to block out periods to research and write. Realizing that this is not academia, however, publishing does validate and qualifies the public historian on a given subject. It may not be publish or perish, but telling the public of their history and why it is relevant becomes the report.

Working from home on history projects helps me separate the daily routine of the 9 to 5 workday. By working from home, I can set my priorities. Research from home can be coupled with writing and interpretation. Working as a public employee can make interpretation complex. It becomes especially knotty when there are many issues involved in the subject. Recently, a reconstructed cross which represented a marker left by the Spanish in 1769 was vandalized (cut down) and the City Council was asked to replace it. The ACLU became involved over separation of church and state and objected to its replacement. The council requested a historical context report and verification of the exact location of the original 1769 cross. Here was a great opportunity to practice history, educate the public and collaborate with other historians concerning the multifaceted issues involved in the cross restoration and the possible legal dispute. It also offered a chance to put a positive impact on my role as a public historian.

Monterey history is marketable. One area I have been asked to play a role is promoting heritage tourism to help bring people, hence revenue, to the city. This is an educational function to let the public know of the remarkable California history that abounds here. During this economic crisis, the promotion of heritage tourism is more important than ever and is a priority. Budget constraints have forced the Museum and Cultural Arts Division to reduce hours for an already spread-thin staff. I am the only full time employee who is supported by five half-time employees.

Working 9 to 5 as the Museum and Cultural Arts Manager gives me very little time to “practice history” in a pure sense. It does, however, open doors due to the fact that much of what I do is centered on Monterey’s past. I try to be creative in the presentation of that history using different formats to promote the many different layers of Monterey’s past.

Practicing history is not a 9 to 5 job. Research, interpretation and reporting require blocks of time. How one balances the administrative and bureaucratic responsibilities will determine how much history is practiced.

## **Barbara Gossett**

My experiences of part-time work in the field of public history while employed full-time are docent work on Sunday afternoons at an oil museum on the site of an old oil boom town, which was also the subject of my public history project for a Master of Arts degree, and irregular work in historic preservation as an unpaid “consultant” (I use that term very loosely) with planners in the city where I live, Garden Grove, California. Neither of these has yielded any significant opportunities for paid assignments. I will begin working as a volunteer one day a week at the Center for Oral and Public History at Cal State University, Fullerton, which is also my alma mater. There are occasional opportunities for paid assignments through COPH; I did an oral history for the City of Santa Ana on the career of their City Manager, directly as a result of maintaining contact with the Center. Although I was not a volunteer at that time, I was a recent graduate, which perhaps has a similar degree of visibility.

Given the amount of time I’ve had available to dedicate to volunteer work, I confess my expectations for a parallel career in history were not high. I suspect that if I were working more regularly and for longer periods with the city planners in Garden Grove, there might have been some paid work, although as a retired planner myself, I’m not sure whether the tasks would be more historical or planning in nature. The public history role I enjoy most is architectural historian; that’s my approach as a docent and as a consultant/concerned citizen. As docent at an oil museum, I’ve presented the story of the old town site to scouting groups and elementary school students; for a graduate with an MA degree, this experience could translate into work as a teacher, possibly even at the community college level.

I’m aware of one success story: a colleague at CSUF/COPH had spent as much time as she could as a volunteer with the historical society in Brea, a town near Fullerton. She has since been hired on a part-time basis working with the society’s museum. However, she has kept her “day job”, so her assignment is still part-time.

## **Susan Whipple**

My name is Susan Whipple. I work full-time as a technical writer, part-time at the Old Idaho State Penitentiary, and am in the last semester of completing my Masters in History. I am also trying to do some volunteer work at the Idaho Black History Museum, putting together an exhibit on the experience of African Americans in Idaho. To complicate things a bit more, my elderly mother fell last year, shattered her femur, went through rehabilitation and is back home with my 86 year old father. Their desire is to stay in their home, so my sister and I share helping them out to make that possible. All I really want to do is work full-time in public history as an historical interpreter or in the education division of a museum.

I find myself struggling with all of the commitments on my time and feeling that there is not a minute of the day that I should not be someplace or doing something for one of the jobs or for someone else. I am overcommitted at this point in time. It was not too bad until the parent issues became part of the tapestry of my life. As my graduate advisor stated, “You are in triage mode. You have to prioritize what you need to do.” Unfortunately, the Idaho Black History project



(which I find most interesting) is relegated to getting the least attention. I am hoping once my Masters is completed there will be more time to work on that project.

First is my full-time job. I write books and training for HP LaserJet printers and large format printers that produce billboards, vehicle wraps and other oversized printed materials. I work five days a week in a cubicle and find that I feel I am just writing words without any meaning to me. I do have a great boss which makes it tolerable. I have very little in common with the other five people I work with. This is my major source of income and allows me to pay for my house.

On weekends I go to the Old Idaho State Penitentiary. I conduct tours, work the front desk, and assist with research for exhibits. I enjoy the work and I enjoy the people. The prison records are at the State Archives which is only open Wednesday through Saturday until 5pm. On days that I need to use the archives I go to my regular job at 7am so I can make it to the archives by 4pm and have an hour to work. An hour is obviously not a long enough time block for intense research.

My Masters project is an historical travel guide to the Snake River Canyon Scenic Byway. Over the past year I completed most of the research, but as the book comes to fruition I know there will be gaps I need to fill in. Most of the text, the book layout, and the photographs need to be written and assembled. This project is going to be defended in April of this year.

The Idaho Black History project also requires a great deal of work at the archives and conducting oral interviews. It is difficult because of scheduling. The limited hours of the archives makes it a struggle for me to get there to do focused research. The oral interviews have also become problematic since many of the people live out of state which complicates the process of conducting historically accurate interviews over the phone.

The major challenge I face is having time to go to the state archives and other places which have the primary documents I need to access when they are open. I also find it difficult to find consecutive hours where I can focus on one topic and feel I have accomplished something. Due to the interrupted time I get to spend researching I find I have notes all over the place that lack continuity. My perception of my work is that it is disjointed and because I have spent sporadic time on it, I find I have to constantly refer to my notes on topics that I should be able to recall immediately.

The strategies I have tried so far with limited success are trying to be more organized by keeping separate notebooks for each project, planning my time so that I only attempt research on one project at a time, and using vacation days to go to the archives to research. I cannot say these have been extremely productive methods.

The separate notebooks have been helpful and allow me to keep notes together. But I find I spend a great deal of time rereading notes before I am ready to move forward and by that time the librarians are helping me out the door so they can close. I have yet to organize myself to the point where I can go in tell the librarians the materials I need and start looking at them right away. The charges for extensive copying and scanning of documents is excessive and not a practical solution.

Focusing on only one project at a time helps, but by the time I get back to the others I feel I am starting from scratch again, even though that is truly not the case. My perception is that I am always starting at the beginning.

Taking vacation days works for a bit, but eventually I know I am going to want to actually take a vacation and will need those days. This is not a long-term answer.

The more I get involved in research the more I know that is what I want to do. I get personal satisfaction from history and sharing history with others. The technical writing is just a job. I feel no dedication to it nor do I feel I am contributing to a broader audience or purpose. The more I work at technical writing the more I know that it is important to me to find full-time employment in a public history field.

What I struggle with is finding a position in the public history field that is full-time and would allow me to keep my house. I am unsure of the best avenues to pursue in finding full-time employment in the history field.