NCPH 2016 Working Group statement

Ashley Whitehead Luskey,
Independent historian & historical consultant

Historical Thinking as Good Civic Health: Thinking Critically, Debating Civilly, and Engaging Meaningfully: Making the Case for History's Essentiality in Today's Society

As we professional historians, public history practitioners, and public intellectuals so often espouse, history is the lens through which we strive to help others understand our collective past and our own roles, meaning, and value in the present. History, we argue, is essential for understanding humanity, relationships, and power relations. It helps us understand causal relationships, and it provides insight, inspiration, perspective, and knowledge for correcting current flaws and failures in contemporary society. However, the study of history provides far more than content knowledge, for at its very core, it teaches us how to think critically, converse rationally, debate civilly, and engage meaningfully. And in today's society—one dangerously divided by partisan politics, paralyzed by the inability to engage in civil and thoughtful dialogue across ideological lines, hampered by a refusal or inability to engage in critical thinking and sound decision-making, and suffering from an astounding lack of historical awareness, contextualization, and long-range perspective—such skills have never been more necessary.

Throughout the nine years I spent working as a front-line historian and interpreter for the National Park Service, coupled with my time spent as an adjunct professor of history and, most recently, as an independent historian and consultant, the alarming lack of historical thinking skills within our society has become increasingly troubling to me. On countless occasions, I have heard students and visitors alike toss around statements in which the past and present are either viewed as two entirely disparate epochs or inaccurately elided through a poorly grounded "there's a history for that" type of assessment of the present. I have also encountered myriad situations in which personal biases, unchallenged assumptions about the past, and insufficient or one-sided evidence have dictated individuals' entire (mis)understanding of the past and its contemporary legacies. And on far too many occasions, I have listened to such individuals refuse to even question their own biases or evidence, and have heard them demonize purveyors of opposing views in an effort to avoid confronting challenges to their own ideas.

In light of such trends, recent calls by politicians, university administrators, and other leaders in the educational system to decrease funding to the humanities as a whole—and to history education, both within and beyond the classroom, in particular—are both baffling and deeply concerning for history practitioners such as myself. Often labeled irrelevant, "stodgy," and a monetarily poor investment when compared with the STEM fields, history has become increasingly devalued in terms of both its quantitative and qualitative contributions to society. Ironically, this fundamental misunderstanding of the value of historical thinking and the current shift away from history education has only further heightened several of the very problems in American society that administrators and politicians so vocally lament.

We need a plan to better communicate, in clear and convincing terms, to policymakers, administrators, and the public at large the immense value and applicability of historical thinking to fundamental aspects of daily civic life. We must stress that an education in history or a visit to an historic site or museum does not merely benefit the history major or "buff," but rather is instrumental in creating engaged, aware, critically thinking individuals of us all—the writer and the scientist, the musician and the mathematician, the linguist and the technician, the philosopher and the athlete. We must also stress that such skills are essential for fostering intellectually honest, rational, responsible, and respectful conversation between individuals with a variety of ideological backgrounds, political persuasions, and personal beliefs.

Certainly, professional historians themselves are not wholly immune from the above-mentioned problems that plague society today and inhibit necessary civic dialogue. And, of course, educating and encouraging individuals to "think historically" does not automatically cleanse society of all the inhibitors to civil debate and rational dialogue. Personal political biases, the immediacy of current events and the knee-jerk passionate responses they provoke, compounded, of course, by today's social media-driven culture, in which we feel compelled to comment upon/pass judgment on/respond immediately to every news story or controversial story posted to Facebook, Twitter, and other outlets, have the tendency to blind even the most thoughtful of individuals and produce a disturbing amount of ahistorical thinking from even some of the most esteemed historians of our time. Therefore, historians, too, must make a better effort at applying the analytical and debate skills they use in their work more broadly in their everyday interactions with others and in their responses to current events and political debates.

However, despite these flaws and blind spots within our own profession, the case for more broadly promoting the acquisition and application of historical thinking skills through the increased funding and public support of both history education and public history sites remains strong. It is largely through a recommitment to "thinking historically," I believe, that we can make true progress toward social, political, and civic advancements in the future. Such thinking demands the ability to analyze conflicting evidence calmly and rationally, a proficiency in identifying contextualizing patterns between past and present, as well as the facility to identify change over time and contingencies that account for important differences between past and present. Such thinking also demands the acceptance of opposing viewpoints, including those that unsettle or unnerve us, an honest assessment of multiple solutions to a given problem, attention to historical and contextual nuance, and the embrace of calm, rational debate as healthy and necessary, rather than the vilification or demonization of the debater him/herself. Thinking historically necessitates an open mind, control of knee-jerk emotions, a search for and belief in a common, ideological middle ground, and a sincere effort to truly understand conflicting views and evidence before passing judgment. Through such thinking, individuals are better able to understand as well as influence history as it continues to unfold around them everyday.

Tackling the myriad problems that our society currently faces regarding civic dialogue, critical thinking, respectful cross-ideological debate, the embrace of multiple perspectives, responsible and informed decision-making, and the rejection of rash and pointed personal attacks in favor of sincere intellectual exchange undoubtedly requires multiple revisions to the way we think, interact, and behave on both an individual and collective basis. However, by recommitting ourselves to learning how to think historically—and by applying such thinking skills to a wider variety of both everyday situations and national conversations—we would be doing ourselves a great service. Such recommitment requires a concerted, renewed effort on our part as history educators and practitioners to make a stronger, more vocal case to administrators, policymakers, students, and the general public for the relevance and value of history as an education in both content knowledge and in civic skills development. This involves a clearer explanation of the specific skills taught through the historian's toolkit and a more widespread dissemination of that toolkit across multiple fields, professions, and institutions.

We must lobby to administrators and policymakers for increases in funding, staffing, and other resources by more clearly illustrating their necessity in the acquisition and application of the "historian's toolkit." We must make a clear case for the toolkit's potential usefulness in helping to break up the political gridlocks, break down the ideological impediments, and quell the rash decision-making and personal attacks that continue to tear our nation apart and inhibit necessary social progress. We must also more vocally stress the toolkit's promotion of the critical thinking, civil debate, and responsible appropriations of history we so desperately need to reunify our country and move forward in an ethical and just way on the issues that currently divide us and paralyze progress.

Additionally, we must help schools and universities better communicate not only the inter-disciplinary process of "doing good history," but also the value of a history education to their students by more forthrightly addressing, in class and through career fairs and student-friendly symposia, the broad merits of both historical content and thinking for a wide array of disciplines and careers. Similarly, we must help historic sites and museums better communicate the value of the historian's toolkit to the public and more effectively teach the toolkit's skills through programming and exhibits that both expose visitors to the investigatory process of "doing good history" and foster healthy debate and dialogue about sources, evidence, and argument. By serving as on-site, community "learning labs" not only for content knowledge but also for civic dialogue and critical thinking skills, historic sites and museums can use their site-specific resources to more explicitly communicate, and educate the public in, the dual value of history as well as help train the public in the more productive and responsible use of such skills in everyday situations that transcend the geographical and temporal boundaries of the site itself.

Ultimately, such historical thinking demands a classroom without boundaries in which we, both individually and collectively, recommit ourselves to intellectual standards of study, debate, and dialogue that champion civic engagement and the civil exchange of ideas. Such thinking is fundamental to improving the civic health of our society in the present and to creating a national future of which we can be most proud. It is up to us—the teachers, the scholars, and the practitioners—to lobby, in a variety of arenas, for the support and resources necessary to create that classroom and help guide us back on track toward that proud future.

"Standing up for History in the War on the Humanities."
Jennifer Dorsey, PhD
Siena College

Academic historians may be the weakest line of defense in the "war" on the humanities. Our unwillingness to adapt new pedagogies, and specifically project-based learning or experiential learning (all intuitive to our STEM colleagues) contributes to the common perception that humanists do not know how to educate 21st century learners. Our insularity or general unwillingness to collaborate with history colleagues in diverse professions (museums, libraries, parks, k-12) undermines our common cause to defend and champion history education wherever it happens. Our distaste for sharing content knowledge with neophytes has driven general readers searching for historic context that helps explain contemporary developments into the arms of the 9-12 Project.

Academic historians have now found themselves in a downward spiral. Students who want history knowledge know from experience that history *content* is readily available to them via Google Books, the History Channel, podcasts, or the latest storybook by Bill O'Reilly. With so much content readily available, why pursue a history degree or even coursework in history? Without students clamoring for more history, university administrators cannot justify investing more money in academic history programs (faculty).

Academic historians have further contributed to our own irrelevance by refusing to align what we do with citizenship education. Museum educators, k-12 educators, and the mission statements of numerous public and private universities readily identify history education (or social studies education) with citizenship education, but few academic historians develop curriculum with an eye towards teaching students about their rights and responsibilities as citizens in a participatory democracy. Nor does our scholarship illustrate to our students that historians share with *other citizens* the responsibility of being good stewards of cultural heritage (local, national, and international).

In 2015, Patricia Limerick, PhD, Faculty Chair of the Center for the American West, challenged the membership of the Organization of American Historians to consider how the current structures of the history profession(s) undermine our common mission to promote historical knowledge and understanding. She proposed that we need more empathy for, and engagement with, one another across our categories of employment. Agreed, but how?

I contend that academic historians should actively make common cause with history professionals in diverse career settings. We should actively work with them to determine how a history education at the collegiate level can better prepare students for life, work, and citizenship. We should aspire to produce graduates who may work in STEM professions but

intuitively recognize and advocate for history education and historic preservation as right, necessary, and good for a healthy democracy.

In the meantime, academic historians do not need to sit on the sidelines while STEM gets all the glory (and resources). Academic historians can readily adapt STEM-type pedagogical practices, namely project-based learning and community-engaged research, to revitalize the discipline. Project-based learning emphasizes training in hard skills like information literacy and soft skills such as teamwork.

Similarly, academic historians can identify scholarly projects that will serve history preservation and education in the present. Academic historians can work with colleagues in museums, libraries, K-12 settings to identify real problems in cultural heritage preservation (for example) that can be the focus of their own scholarship or student research. Doing such community engaged research is an opportunity for academic historians to *model* problem solving and stewardship.

Finally, academic historians should not just graduate teachers and museum professionals but engage with them throughout their careers in professional development training, common professional associations, and other venues that promote collaboration and break-down hierarchy. The health of the discipline requires that we think of ourselves as a community of historians and interact with one another throughout our respective careers as partners in this common cause of promoting history knowledge.

Case Statement, NCPH Working Group: Standing Up for History in the War on the Humanities

Kim Fortney, Deputy Director, National History Day

December 20, 2015

Every history professional must promote the relevance of history. Historians, museum professionals, archivists, librarians, and history educators have a stake in this effort. The History Relevance Campaign seeks to encourage history professionals to speak in unison as we assert that history matters for the individual and the community, in daily life and in preparing for a worthwhile future. Now, right now, we can deliver a clear, consistent message from our respective corners of the globe.

What should that message be? The History Relevance Campaign developed the Value of History statement, a document that outlines seven reasons that a study of history matters. Each professional in the greater fields of history must distribute and present this document. Doing so gives us hope that we might move the needle of the perception of history from nice to necessary.

History is personal. If one thinks of history as a subject, with a capital "H," it becomes about people and events of the past and a yawn is a likely response. But it is so much more than that. History is a collection of stories and stories are about people with real lives, real sorrows, real hardships, real moments of joy and fulfilment. Stories are about families as they struggle, celebrate, migrate, and change. Stories are about individuals who take a stand, run with an idea, fail miserably, and succeed. Every single human has a story. Along each person's story arc are connections to other people through family, culture, religion, educational experiences, play, business transactions, exchanges on the street corner. When history is taught and presented as a small "h," it is understood to be personal.

Everyone's history deserves to be told. History professionals have the content knowledge to provide historical perspective and context to individual stories, but sharing that knowledge in a way that draws connections between people and brings them together in dialogue, helping them

to see parallels between their stories and laying the foundation of relationships requires stepping out of our comfort zone and demonstrating the lessons of the history we treasure so much.

We talk about the importance of distinguishing between the study of historical content and the development of critical thinking and other essential life skills. Indeed, these skills are among the seven core values espoused by the History Relevance Campaign. Certainly other subjects teach skills. STEM subjects get a lot of attention and have greater backing of the business community. Yet, business leaders value employees with training in the humanities – employees who can write, craft a defensible argument, recognize credible evidence, discern when something is biased, and persevere through a challenging task. We know that National History Day students outperform their peers in these areas; we need further studies of students and adults to make an even stronger case for the importance of studying history in key skill development. But we also need studies of everyday programs and efforts being made by history practitioners who are actively sharing their passion for history in their communities. For example, we need to measure the effectiveness of museum-hosted community gatherings geared toward solving current problems by understanding them in historical context and of school programs about explorations of family history. We need more data.

We can lament the decline of history and the rise of STEM and call it a war, if we are so inclined. We can wish that we could compete with STEM on economic grounds. I think our time is better spent in demonstrating the power of history by speaking with one voice about its relevance to those outside of the history community through effective programs and initiatives that result in individuals seeing their stories, their families' stories, and their communities' stories as history – a history that they value, honor, and want to share.

Hope Shannon
Standing Up for History Case Statement

Though many historians talk about the tough job market and a war on the humanities, relatively few actively advocate for funding history education and historic sites, use historical knowledge to shape legislation or policy, or work to solve other contemporary issues related to our field. There are many reasons for this lack of advocacy work among historians, but the two I discuss here are the unproductive divisions between historians working within the academy and those working outside of it and the lack of history advocacy education and awareness in graduate programs.

First, many historians are not involved in advocacy work because they do not communicate regularly with audiences outside of the academy, nor are they expected to. Many academic historians still describe non-academic history work as "alternative" and position it as less important than academic history. These enduring beliefs shape graduate-level history education and as a result, many universities continue to produce historians who do not understand the importance or intricacies of non-academic history work and who do not feel that they are responsible for participating in these conversations. This mentality persists despite the fact that the number of professionally-trained historians finding employment outside of academia has grown immensely since the 1970s. University history departments across the United States (and abroad) have built undergraduate and graduate public history programs and the professionalization of public history work has created a thriving cohort of professional historians who work outside of academia. And yet, despite the rise in the number of historians working outside of academia (or perhaps because of it), many academic historians still believe that non-academic history work is outside of their purview.

Secondly, few graduate-level history programs incorporate a comprehensive study of present-day history advocacy efforts into their coursework. Even among public history

programs, which focus much more on applying history skills outside of the academy than traditional history programs, few include projects or coursework related to current history advocacy or the history of humanities advocacy. Because of my interest in this topic, I sought to learn about advocacy work in an extracurricular setting but have been discouraged by the lack of graduate students and new professionals involved in these discussions. Few of my peers are aware of or interested in the pressing need for history advocacy because their graduate programs teach them very little about the issues facing our field.

To make a stronger case for history's contemporary relevance, historians need to stop defining non-academic history work as "alternative." By defining public aspects of history work as alternative, historians working in the academy excuse themselves from engaging with public audiences and demonstrate that communicating with the public is low on their list of professional priorities. Historians need to stop thinking about the field as divided by the academic—non-academic divide and more as a field occupied by historians who all share a common concern for history, history's relevance today, and public understandings of the past. In addition to breaking down the academic—public divide, all graduate-level history programs need to make history advocacy and the history of advocacy work a more central part of their coursework. We should diversify the kinds of material taught in graduate school so that all students—the next generation of historians—better understand the issues confronting the history profession. To grow and thrive, history advocacy efforts need the participation of the newly-minted historians who will shape the future of our field.

Monica Smith's "Standing Up for History" Case Statement
NCPH 2016

The history field is facing an identity crisis today in the United States as it takes a backseat while STEM has become the driving force in K-12 education. This shift happened in part because parents, policymakers, and some educators became deeply concerned about whether or not 21st-century American youth are gaining the skills and knowledge they need to successfully engage in the global workforce and compete in the global economy.

In 2011 the National Science and Technology Council's Committee on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (CoSTEM) Education was established by the 2010 America COMPETES Reauthorization Act. Its purpose was not only to better coordinate STEM education activities and programs across the Federal government, but also to develop a five-year strategic plan to broaden and deepen STEM education. In the cover letter of the official strategic report published in 2013, the STEM need is stated as follows:

> "The health and longevity of our Nation's, citizenry, economy, and environmental resources depend in large part on the acceleration of scientific and technological innovations….Maintaining America's historical preeminence in the STEM fields will require a concerted and inclusive effort to ensure that the STEM workforce is equipped with the skills and training needed to excel in these fields.[1]

I think that notion of "historical preeminence" could play a role in how we can effectively incorporate STEM into history and history into STEM—they are not mutually exclusive. The United States has often been touted as preeminent in STEM fields, especially since World War II, due to its strong track record for producing major scientific and technological inventions and innovations. To understand that preeminence, and whether or not it is in jeopardy, we need to use history as the lens for teaching the public about the political, economic, social, and cultural contexts in which scientists, engineers, and other inventors were and are working, and how changes over time have changed the nation. How can we raise the profile of history back up to STEM's level? I believe the answer is, in short, "if

[1] National Science and Technology Council. *Federal Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education 5-Year Strategic Plan: A Report from the Committee on STEM Education*. Washington, DC: National Science and Technology Council, 2013.
https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/stem_stratplan_2013.pdf

you can't beat 'em, join 'em." We have an opportunity and, I daresay, a responsibility to show that history is relevant to and interwoven with STEM and with our nation's "health and longevity" in general.

The mission of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History (NMAH) is to "help people understand the past in order to make sense of the present and shape a more humane future."[2] History can and should provide an important framework for understanding the broader human experience, including not only the roles of STEM fields but also of politics, economics, culture, and the arts in our daily lives. At the Museum's Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation where I work, our specific mission is to study and disseminate the history of invention and innovation and to encourage inventive creativity in young people.[3] Fortunately, the topic of invention serves as an excellent, interdisciplinary umbrella for combining STEM with history for our museum visitors. The Lemelson Center is uniquely situated not only to share stories, artifacts, and archives of historic scientists, engineers, and other inventors based on NMAH research and collections, but also to bring today's inventors and innovators together with the public, making the interdisciplinary world of invention more accessible and providing positive role models.

At the Lemelson Center, we have spent more than 20 years exploring what people do or do not know about America's invention history and what they would like to learn. Through evaluation studies, we know that our Museum visitors are extremely interested in stories about historical inventors and the invention process, but the majority have little to no knowledge about the breadth or depth of history, often learning simple myths rather than complex facts. When asked to name inventors, interviewees mention the "usual suspects"— Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, the Wright Brothers, Steve Jobs— but rarely know about individual women, minority, or non-American inventors, let alone teams of inventors. I believe this is because of the way they have been taught about America's invention history, which tends to focus on a narrow selection of "heroic" individuals (e.g. Edison, "The Wizard of Menlo Park"), discrete time periods (e.g. the Civil War), a few places (e.g. Silicon Valley), and privileged fields (e.g. communications,

[2] http://americanhistory.si.edu/museum/mission-history

[3] http://invention.si.edu

transportation), with an overarching narrative of technological progress. Unfortunately, this stereotypical approach tends to leave out a huge swath of engaging, accessible, and important stories about diverse people inventing throughout time, in a variety of places, and across all fields, as well as about the sometimes unintended negative consequences of invention.

Fortunately, at the Lemelson Center we have learned that visitors are excited to find out more about lesser-known as well as famous inventors, places, and inventions, to debunk myths, to think about how invention and innovation are relevant to their daily lives, and to tap into their own inventive abilities. Inspiration is achieved most effectively when people meet contemporary inventors or learn about lesser-known historical inventors who "look like them." This approach informs our exhibitions, including *Invention at Play* and *Places of Invention*[4]; inventive skill-based initiatives such as our Spark!Lab hands-on invention gallery at NMAH; public programs and publications; and other research and educational outreach activities. Our goals are to broaden peoples' understanding of invention and innovation, showcase the diversity of inventors shaping American history, and encourage children and adults to apply their curiosity and skills to solving real-world problems today and in the future. Through engaging stories of inventors and their scientific and technological inventions and innovations throughout American history, we help visitors see themselves as part of that ongoing narrative. I believe this approach of weaving history, biography, and STEM together can be adapted in other educational contexts to help raise the profile of history to prominence again.

[4] The award-winning *Invention at Play* exhibition is no longer on view. *Places of Invention* is on display now at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History and online at http://invention.si.edu/places-invention.

Jordan Biro Walters' Case Statement
"Standing up for History in the War on the Humanities"
Working Group, NCPH 2016

Humanistic knowledge serves as a foundation for understanding and improving the global human experience. Humanities scholars think critically and creatively, engage in interdisciplinary collaboration, and cultivate a complex knowledge of languages, cultures, and histories that others draw upon and apply to their professional contexts. Yet, the current collegiate climate emphasizes the study of *science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM),* and thus discounts the relevance of humanities. At the upcoming 2016 annual conference of the National Council on Public History, a group of academic historians, public history practitioners, and public intellectuals will come together in order to stand up for history and promote its value within and beyond the academy.

As both an academic and a practitioner in the field of public history, my approach to improving the promotion of history is twofold. First, academic historians need to train a new generation of "history communicators" as well as take on the role themselves. We can begin by tackling history curriculum revision while still preserving rigorous training for students in reading, writing, research, and critical thinking. In my own classroom, I have modified course work to help students bring historical insight to the public. In all of my courses, undergraduates work collaboratively on projects connected to real-world clients. As an illustration, one of the group projects allows students to make use of archival collections at the College of Wooster in order to construct an exhibit at the Wayne County Historical Society. This project, and others, enables students to widen the presence of historical thinking outside of the classroom. At the same time, professors of history need to take a pragmatic approach to retooling history programs in order to interweave the benefits of STEM and humanities. We should assess what other kinds of skills—budgeting, accounting, and media training, for example—history students need to participate in a wide array of endeavors.

I also propose that we seek collaborations across colleges and universities, both within humanities and across disciplinary boundaries to engage colleagues in the areas of engineering, business, law, medicine and public health. We should develop teaching partnerships between history faculty and faculty from other disciplines. In the field of history, bridging academic and public history is key. I see a way to better connect the two through the American Historical Association-Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Career Diversity Initiative. The AHA's three-year career diversity pilot project prepares doctoral students to pursue a wide spectrum of career opportunities and thus widen the influence and relevance of historians. The AHA's aim of placing historians in broader career fields correlates with the NCPH working group's objective of "channeling the national devaluing of history into productive action." The AHA and NCPH are both concerned with history's place in society and engaged in ways to improve it. We should collaborate.

The larger challenge is developing partnerships with non-historians and building a coalition of allies, which will lead to effective historical advocacy. From here, we should reach out to private and public employers to demonstrate how historians' particular forms of expertise—research; critical thinking; project development and management; and grant writing—can be of use. As a practicing public historian, due to my work on several community projects including legislative researcher for the Association for California High Speed Rail, legislative chair for the California Council for the Promotion of History, oral historian for the LGBT Educational Archives Project, and others, I have forged working relationships with public history institutions, nonprofits, and lobbying firms. Active involvement with these agencies helps demonstrate how humanistic thinking benefits business, government, and nonprofits.

We must determine to adapt our curriculum and our culture in an effort to put history to work across a larger landscape. I have presented a broad sense of possibility and pursuing

every avenue of outreach is overly ambitious. But by starting with an array of ways to put history to work in education and wider professional communities, we can fine-tune and create an action plan that will demonstrate the importance of historical knowledge in our world.

Tim Grove – Case Statement – 12/21/15

Smithsonian Institution

Our working group is a good mix of public history practitioners and scholars/teachers. For the most part these two groups focus on different audiences, but both work toward deeper historical understanding. One of the ongoing challenges the history field faces is finding ways for these two groups and other groups under the "history" umbrella to work together toward a common goal and to articulate a common message. Perhaps the best use of this working group could be to strategize specific steps forward that will address this challenge and offer practical ways to use the two groups to raise the profile of history. The "message challenge" relates to public perception or history brand. Until we consistently demonstrate why history is relevant and how it develops useful life skills, the humanities will always lag behind STEM in public value. The History Relevance Campaign has used the phrase "not only nice but necessary" to describe the end goal for the perception of history. In my opinion, the goal should not be to attempt to prove that history is more relevant than STEM, but that it deserves equal footing in terms of recognition of its value to a healthy society.

For me, one part of the message must be educating about the history process – the lack of understanding of how to evaluate sources and think critically about information is leading on a troublesome trajectory to people who blindly state opinions without citing evidence and thinking critically about evidence. The problem within history circles all too often is the emphasis on content to the detriment of process. The three bullet points that somewhat capture what I'd like to discuss are below.

- challenges of communicating the value of the skills taught by history (critical thinking, attention to context, contingency, and change over time, ability to recognize historical patterns but also disruptions to historical patterns, respectful disagreement, perspectivism, understanding of human nature/relationships, identity formation and

fulfillment, etc) to the public and policymakers, as well as the relevance of those skills to contemporary discussions/civic dialogue

- challenges of separating, yet engaging with, issues of heritage and memory from issues of "raw history" and how the former has led some to write off the latter as "fluff" or too subjective to be taken seriously
- ideas about bringing history even more into the community/allowing the public to see/confront history more often, and in more places, in order to educate, empower, engender civic dialogue, increase historical stewardship

Of course identifying and clarifying the message is one part of the challenge. The other is defining the target audiences. As stated above, the various segments of the history field tend to reach different audiences. How can the segments work together to reach the broadest swath of society?

The History Relevance Campaign, working mostly from a practitioner perspective, has identified three distinct audiences: 1) History Organizations (meaning public history organizations such as historical societies, historic house museums, state agencies, historic sites, etc.), 2) K-20 Education, and 3) Funders. I'd be interested to see the working group not only discuss and strategize how to reach these audiences, but also other audiences that the broader field could reach.

If the working group could build from previous work of the History Relevance Campaign and further refine target audiences and develop a strategy with several easy ways for disparate history groups to work together toward the common goal of articulating and demonstrating history's relevance, it will make a valuable contribution to moving this issue forward.

John Dichtl

Working Group Case Statement

American Association for State and Local History

I am grateful to Ashley Luskey for proposing this Working Group, "Standing up for History in the War on the Humanities." We in the historical enterprise cannot spend enough time on the core goal here of getting more people to see that history is relevant. Continually articulating why history is important and why historical thinking is critical simply has not been discussed enough among and between historians in the academy or in the broader public history realm, nor with our many allies who would support the discipline more forcefully if we asked them to. So the burden is definitely on the broad "us," and for that reason I will quibble with the idea of there being a "war on the humanities." Historians have done a better job than most other humanists to promote their discipline and the humanities, but, in general, the efforts have been sparse, weak, and disconnected.

This month I attended the American Historical Association annual meeting in Atlanta and saw how tremendously far we've progressed and reminded of how much more work there is to do to unite the two largest sectors of the discipline. Though AHA has been making good progress towards broadening the academy's understanding of "the historical enterprise" to include public historians and public history institutions. Though AHA members—i.e., academic historians—are already aware of historians writing for a wide public audience (i.e., "popular history" historians). Though for the last several years the AHA's Executive Director Jim Grossman and its Professional Division have been admirably promoting the idea of "career diversity" for PhD historians, aka "the malleable PhD" idea (i.e., PhD historians can and should make the world better by going to work in banks, start businesses, become diplomats, sell insurance, etc.). And though both Grossman and his predecessor, Arnita Jones—both public historians—actively promoted public history within the AHA… The AHA Council and the organization's 14,000 members still are far from appreciating public history and its approaches and concepts and utility, historians working in public history, or people with history degrees working beyond the academy and the public history sector.

For example, at the AHA meeting in Atlanta the opening plenary was an excellent panel titled "The Confederacy, Its Symbols, and the Politics of Public Culture." It was strong all around, and 300+ people showed up—but it was only 300 people in a conference of 4,000-plus registrants. The vast majority for some reason did not think the topic interesting enough. Or relevant? My guess is that most of them see public history as being American history. They understand the history and memory of the Civil War as not very pertinent to their research and teaching in other fields (Chinese, Early Modern Europe, Latin American, etc.) Yet of course other countries have public history. And the study of history v. heritage/memory is well developed in just about every field of history (e.g., German memory of WWI or WWII, post-Soviet Eastern Europe, China and its Cultural Revolution, etc.). The plenary on Confederate symbols and monuments was a lost opportunity for some comparative public history. Unfortunately, in college and university history departments, public history is something that the Americanists and their students do; and maybe some history of memory is as close as historians of Europe or other non-Americanists will get to public history. This disconnect from public history also weakens academic historians' ability to make the case with students, parents, deans, policymakers about the essential nature of the discipline to modern life.

So the key issues I would like to raise with our group are these.

- Would internationalizing history departments' understanding of public history help draw more academic historians into doing and appreciating public history work? Wouldn't it also help revitalize history courses, the history major, and history MAs and PhDs to have more familiarity with public history concerns such as audience, engagement, relevance, collaborative projects, internships, and diversity of careers? Might we not see an end to massively declining history

course enrollments if students and parents saw academic historians more engaged across the various points of the historical enterprise, more able to talk about careers and actual alumni doing actual history or other interesting work with their history degrees?

- At the same time that history departments are fixing themselves in this way and integrating more vigorously with public history institutions as a result, we need to be speaking in a coherent way as a discipline, or as the "historical enterprise" (borrowing the term from Robert B. Townsend's *History's Babel: Scholarship, Professionalization, and the Historical Enterprise in the United States, 1880-1940*), about the relevance of history. The History Relevance Campaign is leading the way. While the HRC is not quite ready to develop a brand for history, its Value of History statement (http://www.historyrelevance.com/#!endorsers/c10l2) provides language that history practitioners and supporters can use in a very wide range of instances. The more we speak in the same ways about relevance, the more we reinforce the idea. How can we marshal the most help?
- There are many of us already working in the same direction. How can we work together so as not to run into each other or confuse the public with discordant messages? The historians who launched the public history movement in the late 1970s absolutely saw the relevance of history and the importance of the humanities, and NCPH today continues the push. So does AASLH, though many of its members think of themselves as historians or history professionals rather than as public historians or public history professionals. At AHA Jim Grossman is constantly pitching a big tent vision of the historical community, calls on all historians to advocate and promote historical thinking (http://bit.ly/1ORXia4), and now tweets the hashtag #EverythingHasaHistory. (http://bit.ly/1lYpIEh) Meanwhile, this Working Group's Jason Steinhauer has started History Communicators (http://bit.ly/1ZnLaiL). And then there is the History Relevance Campaign. Relevance—Communicators—Advocate—Public History—Historian? How do these terms fit together?

Position Statement
Paul Sturtevant, Smithsonian Institution

Some of the work recently that I've been doing has focused on the problem of messaging within the humanities, and with history in particular.

There is a false dichotomy that arises in that conversation—that promoting the humanities in terms of employability and skills (in a dollars-and-cents sort of way) is betraying what makes the humanities *really* valuable. Rather than the path to a good job, the humanities are instead the path to a good life—making its devotees better citizens, thinkers, people.

I'm sympathetic to that point of view—hell, to some degree I believe it. I wish that we all could live like nineteenth-century aristocrat scholars, indulging in nothing but learning for learning's sake. But obviously, that's not the case (and I'm somewhat unsure whether to see those aristocrat-scholars as truly "better people" no matter how well they knew *Beowulf*).

However, the issue is that if we accede to this point of view fully, we lose. We lose out to STEM in terms of funding (both research and public funding), and we lose out to business schools in terms of student enrollments.

Two studies have been released recently that illustrate this disturbing trend in stark terms. The Washington Post recently reported that between 2008 and 2013, "college enrollment among the poorest high school graduates—defined as those from the bottom 20 percent of family incomes—dropped 10 percentage points… the largest sustained drop in four decades." And Slate has reported that those who have remained have increasingly fled from arts and humanities degrees; as economic times worsen, young people choose majors that they feel will help them land jobs that pay well. The humanities, history included, is seen by some—particularly the poorest of our students—**as a luxury.**

The question is, what to do about it? I think one problem in terms of the public conversation is that history majors, once they enter the workforce, seem to disappear. Those who continue on into the historical professions (history teachers, the history professoriate, museums professionals, archivists, etc.) are a very small percentage of the sum total number of history graduates. I think part of the campaign to fight for history within the public conversation is to hear from the people who found success in other fields as a result of their study of history (rather than in spite of it). And it's crucial for academics at universities (as well as university marketing departments) to be clear and passionate in describing how a deeper understanding of the past arms you to better grapple with the difficult realities of the present. Finally, it's important to have other organizations in the humanities (not just in history) work together to present something of a unified front in this regard.

Studying history is a path to gain the flexible skills to succeed in our changing economy. It also provides the tools to be a deeper thinker, a more astute problem-solver, a more thoughtful citizen, and a more empathetic member of the human race.

It's important that we are able to articulate all of those things forcefully.

Jason Steinhauer
Library of Congress
December 20, 2015

The case statement for "History Communicators" as essential to standing up for history in the "war against the humanities"

The Problem – Why Support History

Why support history?

It's an urgent question on the mind of historians, policymakers and funders.

For historians, the sustainability of our institutions, our profession, our very livelihoods, depends on having an answer that resonates with donors, policymakers and constituents. But what if the question already had an answer—and what was needed was simply a more effective way of expressing it?

The initiative to improve History Communication and establish "History Communicators," an initiative I am currently spearheading, addresses this problem.

We Must Communicate Better

History is interesting. It's often fascinating. It helps explain why things are the way they are. It provides us inspiration. It forces us to examine what it means to be human, and stimulates change and self---improvement. It helps resolve disputes. It can force us to think critically about the world around us. Millions of people in the U.S. enjoy learning it, reading it and studying it.

That history has great value to humanity has proven to be true since ancient times. Human appreciation for history predates the field itself. Yet, today, history as a profession finds itself endangered. Why? Because we have lost the ability to effectively communicate with those beyond our field.

The premise of History Communicators is simple: the history profession, like the sciences, needs to invest in expert communicators across the spectrum of the field who are skilled at connecting meaningfully with non---experts and popular audiences. It is from these demographics that support for our work comes.

History Communicators will not *tell* people why history is relevant; they will *show* it. Through more effective and creative communication, they will demonstrate the value of history, as opposed to simply stating it.

We Must Change Our Mindset

At the heart of History Communicators is a mindset change. The profession has long privileged the creation of historical knowledge over its dissemination. It has rewarded the prolific production of historical texts regardless of how opaque or inaccessible those texts may be. It has supported the production of historical knowledge via traditional communication methods (monograph, lecture) without sufficient attention to how new media (Web, video, social) are rendering these forms obsolete.

The new field of History Communication values accessibility, dissemination and creativity equally to knowledge production. It gives alternate communications the credibility in the field they currently lack. These communications are the ones that are likely to sway policymakers, donors and non---experts.

Putting Principles into Practice

The History Communication movement is being put into effect immediately. Starting in 2016, UMass Amherst, with support from Purdue University and the AHA's National History Center, will host the first---ever summit on History Communication.

A follow---up session will occur in Washington, D.C. in summer 2016. This meeting will outline proposed History Communication curriculum for undergraduates and graduate students. In 2017, UMass and Purdue will co---pilot History Communication courses at their schools. These courses will serve as blueprints for History Communication courses nationwide.

Simultaneously, starting in 2016 we will experiment with how to disseminate historical knowledge in ways that better resonate with non---experts.

Through these efforts, we will *demonstrate* history's value and relevancy outside the field, as opposed to simply talking about among ourselves, as is too often the case.

A Comprehensive Strategy is Needed

History Communicators must work in tandem with other initiatives within the field. These include the History Relevance Campaign and evolutions in both academic history and public history pedagogy. The questions surrounding how we communicate historical knowledge have been discussed for many years. History Communicators cannot work in isolation.

Collaborations must also be formed beyond the field. These partnerships are already in development. I have met with Edelman, the largest PR communications firm in the world, to discuss History Communication, and the two planned workshops will include not solely historians but also journalists, authors, illustrators, communications experts, former elected officials, and scientists.

Making a Difference in the "War Against the Humanities"

If we accept that there is a "war against the humanities"—which is debatable—then we certainly cannot see it as solely a matter of dollars and cents. That misses the forest for the trees. Budgets are about priorities; and today in America, the STEM fields are prioritized over the humanities. STEM degrees are perceived to be more valuable to employers, more practical to students, and capable of producing higher---paying jobs for the workforce. Humanities degrees are perceived as the opposite.

Entities within the humanities have written about how they offer value—but they've yet to effectively *demonstrate* it. Demonstration is the key, and effective communication that resonates with non---experts is the method. It is through our communicative action, in addition to our words, images and ideas, that we can stand up for history and win the hearts and minds of policymakers, funders and the public.

Carrie C. Kotcho Case Statement
"Standing up for History in the War on the Humanities"
Working Group, NCPH 2016

All substantive historical work stems from a compelling question or set of questions, so I will lead off with a big question to frame my position. What are the consequences of generations of citizens who have a poor grasp of historical content and who are unable to marshal evidence to develop positions, make decisions, and take informed action?

When trusted organizations like the National Center for Education Statistics find that only 18% of American 8th graders are proficient in U.S. History, the public reaction is fairly predictable. A flurry of newspaper articles and evening news sound bites about the woeful condition of history education in the United States, politicians blaming the other party for America's decline, and then silence. Is 18% proficiency a bad thing? Most of us will say "Yes! This is a disturbing statistic." But few can articulate what we lose if only a very few people understand how to interrogate the past in order to understand the present and make decisions about our future.

Full disclosure… I am a museum educator at a national museum so I am looking at the issue of history relevance from an educational perspective. I work with K-12 teachers and schools across the country and have a sense of what is happening in classrooms. I read the latest data on the state of history education and public education in general and it disturbs me too. Given the accelerating pace of life, clashing cultures, and the ease with which we can become inhumane, it seems clear that students need the humanities. So, why are science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) subjects getting all the attention and funding?

This is not a diatribe against STEM. The STEM movement, and it is a movement, has given students something more important than increased focus on math and science – it has given them a new understanding and appreciation for inquiry-based, problem-based, and project-based learning. And that is a good thing for history education and the education in general. The loss of focus on history education in K-12 education is more about the prioritization of limited resources than a "war on the humanities."

What can history educators learn from STEM? How did it get so much focus?

In October of 1957, the launch of the Sputnik satellite was framed by some as a "technological Pearl Harbor[1]" and many made the case that the U.S. must increase its ranks of science and math experts or face Russian domination. The call to action was clear and concrete. The resulting movement coalesced around "shock" and "awe." The shock of the situation allowed scientists to leapfrog existing education reform efforts to counteract the perceived security threat. Scientists lead the work to revamp the curriculum to include hands on science labs and a renewed focus on basic research. People were awed by Sputnik, and the public's imagination was ignited. Classrooms acquired filmstrip and overhead projectors and Americans bought home chemistry sets, anatomical models, and disturbingly enough, radioactive atomic energy kits to keep the Russians at bay[2].

[1] Sputnik technological pearl harbor. (1957, Nov 06). Daily Defender (Daily Edition) (1956-1960) Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/493602606?accountid=46638

[2] http://americanhistory.si.edu/mobilizing-minds/introduction

NCPH Working Group Case Statements
Standing up for History in the War on the Humanities

Despite a lack of data to support the idea that our education system was to blame for the Russians launching their satellite first, a broad coalition of corporate, government, education, and working scientists drew attention to the issue, developed plans, and secured significant funding and public support. The National Defense Education Act of 1958 earmarked 1 billion dollars towards education reform. This was the birth of America's first STEM movement.

As we entered the 21st century, calls came once again to revamp the U.S. education system. Business leaders decried the lack of focus on STEM and this time the fear was centered on China and India. Thomas Friedman's "The World is Flat" and viral videos like Karl Fisch's "Did You Know?/Shift Happens" pointed out that through basic population statistics and disruptive technologies, other countries were "out educating" their students and America is in danger of losing its economic supremacy. Friedman and others again invoked the specter of Sputnik to bring urgency to the issue.

As public historians and history educators, what is our Sputnik moment? I would argue that it is the Sputnik moment! The process used by STEM proponents to investigate a historical precedent, do some research, and make a case for contemporary STEM education by drawing comparisons to the Sputnik launch perfectly illustrates the power of history to make sense of our world and shape the future. Even scientists need history in order to create a movement and make change in our society.

History education needs such a movement. An organized, focused group of people working together to advance the idea that history is essential to our society. The movement can build on the great work being done by the National Council on Public History, American Historical Association, Organization of American Historians, American Association for State and Local History, Universities, and the History Relevance Campaign. The time has come to widen the circle and build the type of broad coalition necessary to affect change.

As history experts, we need to answer the question I posed earlier. What are the consequences of generations of citizens with a poor grasp of historical content and who are unable to marshal evidence to develop positions, make decisions, and take informed action? There are many.

The movement must:

- Answer this question and state the consequences in public. First to thought leaders then to the public at large.
- Recruit public officials, corporate entities, and the media to build a broad coalition in order to affect change.
- Work on the front lines. Public Historians and History Educators should commit to demystifying their work as well as helping the public make connections between the past and the present.
- Support and train K-12 educators. They need tools and strategies to implement new ways to teach history.
- Gather data and marshal evidence of the impact of history education. Improving the rigor for measuring impact will win others to the cause, but the movement should not wait for vast studies to be complete before beginning to communicate the core message about the essential nature of history education.

The study of history enables change. Far from a stagnant examination of the past, the act of interrogating history empowers citizens to adapt and thrive in our changing world. Therefore it is essential.