



Call for Working Group Discussants

2017 NCPH Annual Meeting

Indianapolis, Indiana

April 19-22, 2017

Working groups, involving facilitators and up to twelve discussants, allow conferees to explore in depth a subject of shared concern before and during the Annual Meeting. In these seminar-like conversations, participants have a chance to discuss questions raised by specific programs, problems, or initiatives in their own public history practice with peers grappling with similar issues. Working groups articulate a purpose they are working toward or a problem they are actively trying to solve and aim to create an end product(s), such as a report, article, website, or exhibition. For 2017, eight working groups are assembling:

1. [The Economics and Ethics of Internships at the Center of Public History Education](#)
2. [Moving Beyond the National: New Perspectives on International and Transnational Public Histories](#)
3. [Meeting in the Middle: Community Engagement in a Digital World](#)
4. [Mediating the Early American Past for Today's Public\[s\]](#)
5. [Public History Education and Environmental Sustainability](#)
6. [Let Them Hear It: Exploring Public History's Role in Saving Radio Heritage](#)
7. [Establishing History Communication as its Own Field of Study](#)
8. [Sports on Campus: Sporting Traditions as Public History and Memory](#)

To join a working group, please submit a one-paragraph email message describing the issues you wish to raise with your peers, together with a one-page resume, c.v., or biographical statement by ~~October 15~~ **October 23**. We welcome submissions from individuals across a range of professions and career stages. Please see the specific working group descriptions below. Individuals who are selected will be listed as working group discussants in the conference *Program* and will participate in the working group session at the annual meeting.

This winter the group facilitators will ask participants to contribute a case statement of no more than 500-1,000 words for discussion. The case statement will describe a participant's particular experience, define the issues it raises, and suggests strategies and/or goals for resolution. Case statements will be circulated among participants by email and posted in the Public History Commons or in PDF format on the NCPH website. Discussants are expected to read and comment briefly by email on one another's case statements well before the conference date. Some working groups may also have additional shared background reading materials identified by their facilitators.

To apply, please send your paragraph and one-page resume/c.v./biographical statement by ~~October 15~~ **October 23** to ncph@iupui.edu with the specific working group title in the subject line of your email. (You may apply to participate in a working group whether or not you have submitted another presentation or session proposal. You may apply for only one working

group.) All presenters, attendees, and other participants are expected to register for the Annual Meeting. More information about working groups is available at <http://ncph.org/conference/2017-annual-meeting/>.

1. The Economics and Ethics of Internships at the Center of Public History Education

Facilitators: Alexandra Lord, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution
Gregory Smoak, American West Center, University of Utah

Because internships are an integral part of every undergraduate and graduate public history program, the economics and actual benefit of internships must be considered critically. Most public history students intern with non-profit organizations and government agencies which are not required to pay them. For decades, these institutions, many of which face shrinking budgets, have benefited from unpaid labor while effectively shifting the economic burden for these positions to interns themselves.

Although rarely discussed, this practice raises serious concerns about the high cost of public history degrees, the future of the profession, and the expectations the job market imposes on students. Students of modest means who cannot rely on family support and must pay their own way may, for example, be “priced out” of prestigious internships at institutions far from their homes. Does this practice threaten to make public history an increasingly elitist profession? And what are the effects of internships on new public history professionals? Does the ready availability of unpaid labor drive down their earnings or even reduce their job opportunities? Do internships also impose a burden on practitioners who are forced to assume teaching duties that may be beyond the scope of their jobs?

This working group will bring together public history educators and representatives of institutions large and small to weigh the costs and benefits of internship programs as they currently exist while also raising questions as to whether internships help or hinder the creation of a diverse workforce.

2. Moving Beyond the National: New Perspectives on International and Transnational Public Histories

Facilitators: Richard Harker, Museum of History and Holocaust Education at Kennesaw State University
Na Li, Chongqing University

Recently the field of public history has started to move beyond its American-centered domestic roots and practices. A few notable examples of this shift include public historians engaged in international traveling exhibitions, art and object exchange, the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, and the establishment in 2011 of International Federation for Public History-Fédération Internationale pour l'Histoire Publique "to create international linkages between public historians and promote the development of a worldwide network of Public History practitioners." As well as the American Alliance of Museum's recently launched 2016-2020 Strategic Plan reflecting AAM's belief "in active participation in the global community and embracing international perspectives." The recent inclusion of scholarship, perspectives, and reflections on public practice in different countries has caught up with the reality that public history practitioners, whether calling themselves "public historians" or not, have been practicing their craft in other countries for as long as public historians in the United States.

In this working group, we build upon the 2015 NCPH Working Group "Teaching Public History through International Collaborations" and expand our scope of inquiry further. We aim to bring together a diverse range of practitioners and university-based public historians who have a practical and/or theoretical interest in moving beyond the domestic, to include the international and/or transnational. We are particularly interested in understanding and exploring the different modes of public history being used in an international and/or transnational context and the practical and theoretical implications of these practices.

Questions for discussion may include:

- What do the terms "international" and "transnational" mean for public historians, and how do those meanings shape different practices?
- What is "new" about public history in an international and/or transnational context?
- What public history activities adapt well to an international and/or transnational frame?
- What does "collaboration" look like when expanding the geographical scope of public history practice? What are challenges that arise from international collaborations?
- In what ways are the stories we tell about the past altered by changing the scope of our inquiry?
- How are issues of authority, authenticity, and memory negotiated in projects conducted in an international and/or transnational frame?
- What are the institutional and personal limitations of this kind of work?

This working group aims to generate a draft of best practices or guidelines to guide colleagues considering expanding the geographical scope of their work. We also hope that participants might reflect upon the growth of international and transnational public history and its practical and theoretical ramifications for their work in an edited volume exploring these questions, more broadly.

3. Meeting in the Middle: Community Engagement in a Digital World

Facilitators: Kristen Baldwin Deathridge, Appalachian State University
Jane M. Davis, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis
Lara Kelland, University of Louisville

Many public history practitioners have ambitiously envisioned the potential for digital tools, with hopes to engage existing publics more robustly and to make connections to new audiences. The potential of web 2.0 has provided new platforms for the collaborative production of historical knowledge, but such potential has not been fully realized. This working group will engage with the state of digital community involvement, critically interacting with the challenges experienced by participants and collaboratively producing a manual of best practices to be shared after the conclusion of the session.

The conveners of this group have worked on a variety of digital public history projects, from local neighborhood work to managing digitization projects to platform development. In conversations about their experiences with digital community engagement, they have identified a range of salient issues, from questions of form and challenging digital divides, to practice-based questions that engage long-standing issues in the field. At the center of these discussions are questions about different publics: What audiences are expanded by digital work? What audiences are more likely to remain silent? What audiences exist in the middle spaces between active engagement and digital exclusion, who are the audiences in the "digital middle"?

Another major line of discussion revolves around what counts as meaningful participation, and how do we cultivate the most democratic of partnerships:

- How do digital forms advance the goal of shared authority?
- Are there any new challenges posed by the digital sphere, or are the promises of democratized information attainable?
- How do we avoid the colonial imperialist view of digital spaces (i.e. bringing digital enlightenment to the 'natives') while attempting to bridge the digital divide?
- What do we do when our community partners envision a very static kind of participation, for example, only expressing interest in building a website not designed for user-generated content?
- How do we prevent doing the same things and same types of cultural outreach and involvement funneled through new technology?
- How do we adapt our community involvement beyond the middle ground of doing the same thing with new tech and into the realm of doing new things?

Still others of our questions relate more broadly to citizenship in the digital era. These notions extend into the digital era the idea that public historians have an important role in the cultivation of democratic society:

- What are strategies for crossing the digital divide(s)?
- Both those of hardware/connectivity access and more subtle, cultural forms of digital behaviors?
- What role should we be playing in cultivating a digital citizenry that is properly equipped to cultivate digital egalitarian communities?
- Do we as cultural workers have a role in the production of the "digital middle?"

4. Mediating the Early American Past for Today's Public[s]

Facilitators: Rosalind Beiler, University of Central Florida
Judith Ridner, Mississippi State University

In an age of shrinking budgets and expanding new media, historic sites (physical and virtual) are struggling to prove their relevance to twenty-first century audiences. Early American museums, parks, and digital projects are particularly vulnerable as the peoples, places, institutions, and lifestyles of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Americans are more distant, and thus seem less accessible and relevant to visitors and viewers of the present day. Consequently, early American public history practitioners and scholars must develop ways to bridge the gap between this more distant past and the present.

This working group is a follow-up to the well-attended NCPH 2016 roundtable, "Early Americans and the Pursuit of an Inclusive Past." During that session, participants brainstormed some of the unique challenges early American practitioners and scholars face in presenting and interpreting this period to the public[s]. Our working group will continue those discussions in a more focused way.

Questions we will address in this working group will include:

- How can public historians work to overcome or mediate the particular opportunities and challenges posed by early American sites and source materials?

- How can we make more explicit the connections between the more distant past and the present so that early America is more accessible to today's public[s]?
- How can we create new interpretations or make use of new digital tools that more effectively link early American people, places, and artifacts to such contemporary issues as racism, gender, immigration, environmentalism, and global trade?

Our goal is to forge a network of practitioners and scholars who are committed to using various digital and public history platforms to tell more inclusive and complex stories of America's colonial, revolutionary, and early national pasts, and how they relate to the present. To disseminate the results of our conversations, we will encourage members of the working group to propose panels on this topic at various academic and professional conferences. We also hope to produce a journal article for submission to *The Public Historian*.

5. Public History Education and Environmental Sustainability

Facilitators: Melinda Jette, Franklin Pierce University
Andrew Kirk, University of Nevada - Las Vegas

In the twenty-first century, climate change, a growing world population, and the need to live and work with finite natural and financial resources should compel public historians to tackle the complicated and politically charged notion of sustainability. The broadly accepted definition of sustainability is “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs.” That sentiment strongly resonates with public historians’ efforts to preserve historical resources and interpret history for present and future generations. Many members of the National Council on Public History (NCPH) have been advocating some sort of action, personal and professional, for several years. In short, promoting values of environmental sustainability falls squarely in line with the NCPH activities, programs, structure, mission, and Long Range Plan.

For the structure of the session, it will be a Working Group in which participants will present their case statement, followed by discussion, and agreement of a list of action steps and resources to prepare for a webinar and workshop in the future. We will also communicate with relevant NCPH committees.

Sponsored by the NCPH Committee on Environmental Sustainability.

6. Let Them Hear It: Exploring Public History’s Role in Saving Radio Heritage

Facilitators: Jocelyn Robinson, Educator/Independent Media Producer
Julie Rogers, NPR Research, Archives & Data Strategy

Public historians and public radio practitioners have been close allies and collaborators for many years. The field has looked to public radio to hone the craft of storytelling; in turn, historians provide context, expertise and insight to stories. This working group will propose a new type of collaboration: working together to save and share radio archives.

Originally created for programming purposes, today broadcast archives are stored at radio stations or housed at a local museums, libraries and historical societies. These radio broadcasts are valuable primary source material especially important to local and regional histories. By capturing the sounds and voices of the past, radio provides an immediate window into history. Yet these collections are often

underutilized and endangered. The Library of Congress National Recording Preservation Board launched the Radio Preservation Task Force (RPTF) to address this crisis.

Building on the RPTF, this working group will bring together public historians interested in radio preservation. This working group will consider:

- How can public historians work together with radio stations, podcasters, archives, museums and libraries to preserve and share the sound of the past?
- Why are public and community radio archives valuable to public historians and how can we articulate this value?
- What unique role can public historians play in radio preservation? How does public history methodology benefit the Radio Preservation Task Force?
- How might we make these collections accessible and relevant to the public?

The goal of the working group is to start a conversation and build a network of support for public history practitioners interested in archival audio, preservation and creative reuse. During the session we will identify the work that needs to be done, draft a set of best practices for this work and share relevant tools, resources and knowledge. We will document these ideas and conversations in a shared group blog that will serve as a resource for future projects.

7. Establishing History Communication as its Own Field of Study

Facilitators: Kathryn Brownell, Purdue University
Michael T. Caires, Andrew W. Mellon Post-Doctoral Fellow
Christopher A. Graham, American Civil War Museum
Diane Johnson, Lebanon Valley College
Marla Miller, University of Massachusetts Amherst
Jason Steinhauer, The John W. Kluge Center at the Library of Congress

The enthusiastic response to History Communication, launched in a well-attended session at NCPH 2015, has validated that this is a pressing concern of the history profession, particularly public historians. After two years of discussion, University of Massachusetts Amherst and Purdue University plan to launch courses and/or workshops in history communication, and Wayne State University, Johns Hopkins University, Syracuse University and others have expressed interest. As the field begins to coalesce, it is imperative that there be a set of professional values, ethics and guidelines that are agreed to be central to the discipline. There is a need to create a forum through which to discuss values, the parameters and goals of the emerging field, and what potential curricula/training might look like. A summit hosted by the University of Massachusetts in 2016 and an ensuing meeting in August 2016 have made some progress in these areas—and the results of these will be shared with working group participants to consider and expand upon. This working group is an effort to draw more people into this ongoing conversation, and to look for ways to serve the community of people interested in this emerging field.

8. Sports on Campus: Sporting Traditions as Public History and Memory

Facilitator: Andrew McGregor, Purdue University

Sporting traditions serve as a de facto form of public history for many colleges and become a central part of their and their alumni's identity, operating as a what historian Brian Ingrassia describes as a form of "middle brow" culture that appeals to the broader public. Athletic teams are also crucial components of university marketing and recruitment strategies, offering a window into student life, inviting people to campus, and attracting news coverage. Furthermore, campus culture is often viewed as a contributing factor to the success and failures of athletes and teams. This use of sporting traditions divorces them from critical public history, obscuring the context and conditions of sport and campus histories.

Extending conversations from last year's conference, this working group explores the relationship between campus history, sport history, and the identities of colleges and universities, their students, fans, and alumni. In addition to bridging the gaps between sport history and campus history, it hopes to develop strategies for better adding historical context and complicating the narratives told by marketing and sports information departments and sports media. The discussion will center on research and presentation practices, sites for sharing this history, and ways to use sport to track collective pasts and chart collective futures. Key questions that this working group wishes to address are:

- How have marketers and sport media portrayed campus history and sporting events? How can public historians help shape those narratives?
- How might sport history benefit from a deeper understanding of campus events? How might campus history benefit from a deeper understanding of the history of sport?
- How does sport affect our understanding or perception of educational institutions and their history?
- How might public historians respond to sport-related controversies on campus (such as fan behavior, sexual assault, NCAA scandals, mascots, etc.)? What are some effective strategies?
- Where are the best places for public historians to share these histories?

Building off of the 2017 conference theme, the intersection of sport history and campus history serves as a middle ground for multiple interest groups and a place to tell multilayered histories. The result of these conversations will be a best practices document that we hope to make public at *History@Work* and/or *Sport in American History*.