

Conference Paper – Case Statement – Ellen Apperson Brown – Virginia History Exchange

My experience with public history is a story of what I have been doing, personally, over the past ten years, often without the benefit of institutional support. As a graduate student at Virginia Tech (2001-2003), I made use of the University's Special Collections, volunteered at Historic Smithfield, served on the board of the Long Way Home (an outdoor drama about Mary Draper Ingles), and published articles in history journals. As the director of a house museum in Radford, Virginia, I helped launch a coalition of regional museums, arranged to bring professional exhibits to the museum, revitalized the volunteer program and the educational offerings for children (summer history camps, school tours), and initiated a collaborative effort to publish a book (Crossing the New) by Linda Killen, who had been, before her death in 2002, a specialist in regional history at R.U.

While working as director of the Reynolds Homestead Continuing Education Center (2005-2007), I made arrangements for another historian, Jim Crawford (film maker – Down in the Old Belt) to research and write a history of the Reynolds family in Virginia, capturing the untold story of this remarkable family which spawned the growth of two major industrial giants (Reynolds Tobacco and Reynolds Metals). I also initiated a process for developing a site plan and for the historic Rock Spring Plantation, making it into a tourist destination, in collaboration with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, local historians, the Virginia Tech Foundation and Advisory Board, and various academic disciplines at Virginia Tech (architecture, College of Natural Resources, etc.) One other proud accomplishment from my time in Patrick County was the publication of my book, From Jamestown to Blacksburg: The Path to the College of Natural Resources, which won a Virginia Publishing Award in 2007.

Since leaving that post, I have set out to become an "historian for hire" through the creation of a business called Community Archives of Southwest Virginia, LLC. I have developed slide shows and given

talks throughout the area (libraries, museums, DAR and SAR gatherings, and elementary schools), printed flyers and business cards, and joined a group called (Business Networking International) to find out how to run a small business and learn about networking and making referrals. I have found some wonderful clients, including the Kiwanis Club of Roanoke (90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary History), Breakell, Inc. (researching several historic buildings in downtown Roanoke), and a rocket scientist who needs help with cataloging her professional papers.

I launched a website (the Virginia History Exchange – [www.vahistoryexchange.com](http://www.vahistoryexchange.com)) in April of 2010. By November, the website had grown into a substantial digital archive, a sort of virtual museum, and a resource for teaching and learning history. I used the website to good effect when I offered three (3 hour) workshops in Bedford at the city museum, delivering slide presentations entitled *History Soup: a Recipe; Virginia History for Yankees and Other Outsiders*; and *Bedford History: a Review of Local Resources*. This sort of teaching...helping people understand their local history, and giving them the tools necessary to become more confident, and even to become master historians...was what I had always dreamed of doing!

Many people have said to me, “You could get a grant for that!” However, no foundation is going to offer a grant to me as an individual, or to my for profit business (an LLC). I am knocking on the doors of museums, libraries, universities, and colleges...in hopes that one or more of them will be willing to enter into some cooperative arrangement with me by becoming a fiscal sponsor. At the same time I am in the process of negotiating with individuals who might be willing to become founding board members of a 501 (c) 3 non-profit corporation, and with key administrators at institutions of higher education (Hollins University, Virginia Tech, etc.) to try and interest them in becoming sponsoring partners.

My background, prior to coming to Blacksburg ten years ago, included several administrative jobs in the social services arena, with responsibilities for board development, fund-raising, volunteer

coordinating, personnel, and public relations. I have also had considerable experience as a teacher, having earned a MAT in German from UVA in 1977, and held teaching assignments in several public and private schools.

Because there is no center for public history in Southwest Virginia, I have been promoting the idea on my own and finding allies. I have initiated conversations with Explore Park, the Crooked Road, the Wilderness Trail, Historic Smithfield, the Wilderness Road Museum (Pulaski), Bedford Museum, Radford City Public Library, the Community School, the Waldren YMCA (Shawsville), the Roanoke City Libraries, the Fincastle Museum, the Skelton 4H Center at Smith Mountain Lake, the Roanoke Museum and Historical Society, and the Virginia Museum of Natural History in Martinsville. My most recent engagement, the Roanoke Regional Writer's Conference (Jan. 28-29, 2011), where I presented a talk on *Writing History: the Three Legged Stool Approach*, provided me with wonderful opportunities for networking, marketing, and engagement.

My passion for history, my determination to "get things done," and my reputation as a teacher, writer, and visionary thinker, all compel me into this bold venture. I look forward to asking the other participants in the NCPH workshop for advice, and sharing with them what I have learned. The Virginia History Exchange has no physical space set aside for offices or classrooms, but is currently a "virtual center," using the website, email, and the use of temporary classrooms. Plans over the next 6-12 months include forming a 501 (c) 3 non-profit corporation, securing initial funding, offering classes for master historians, launching one or two chapters of those historians, and renting a building in Raleigh Court (Roanoke) where volunteers can meet and learn.

I hope this will result in an institution that can help Southwest Virginia educators do a better job of teaching history, help the general public discover the rich heritage of this region, and provide a forum for discussion and debate.

**Steven Burg, Professor of History, Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania & Director of the Shippensburg University Center for Applied History**

**Case Statement for Working Group Using “Centers” to Teach Public History and Engage Community Partners**

**1. Describe your experiences working with a Center. Were you a student? Faculty member? Community partner? If you have worked with more than one center, please provide some background on all of your experiences in this area.**

This Shippensburg University History Department created the Shippensburg University Center for Applied History in the summer of 2008, and it began operation in the fall of 2008. We created the Center for Applied History with the intent of increasing the History Department’s ability to provide outreach and service to organizations in Central Pennsylvania that lacked the capacity to undertake historical projects on their own. The purposes was also explicitly educational--namely to provide graduate students in our Applied History program and undergraduate students in our Public History concentration with practical experience doing public history work. We envisioned a laboratory where students might utilize their skills in real-world situations.

Since the fall of 2008, I have served as the Co-Director of the Shippensburg University History Department’s Center for Applied History. The responsibilities of the Co-Director have primarily consisted of assisting with the hiring of the four History Department graduate assistants connected with the Center, working with the History Department chair to establish the work schedule of the graduate assistants, and developing public history projects for the graduate assistants. I have also had direct supervision of one-half of one graduate assistant (seven hours per week for fifteen weeks) who I have worked with on public history projects.

Personally, I would like to reorganize the Center for Applied History in order to help it better realize its mission, and to give its graduate student employees a larger role in running the Center. I am hoping that this working group will help provide models for effectively organizing and operating Public History Centers that can be replicated at Shippensburg University.

**2. If you have worked in a center, describe the logistics of how the center functioned. Was it located within a specific department, or was it multi-disciplinary, and if so who were the university departments and programs involved? What kind of organizational structures did it employ? What resources did the university provide? How was the center funded? How did it fit the mission of the university?**

The Center was originally created to serve the public service mission of the university and the History Department, and to provide additional hands-on public history experience for graduate students in our Applied History program and undergraduate in our concentration in Public History. Dr. Steven Burg and Dr. John Bloom who originally conceived of the Center also felt that it would provide a means for providing assistance to the numerous community groups that regularly appealed to the History Department for assistance with historical projects (anniversary histories, oral history projects, historical marker applications, etc.). The Shippensburg University Center for Applied History is located within the Department of History and Philosophy. The four graduate assistants are funded by the Graduate School of Shippensburg University. The Center has not discrete budget or funding, but instead depends on

office supplies and computer equipment obtained through the History Department. An office and phone have also been provided by the History Department. The original founding documents anticipated funding the Center with grants and fee-for-service work, but that has not happened.

The Center's two co-directors are volunteers who receive neither compensation nor reassigned time for working with the Center. Their work is considered part of their departmental service.

The four graduate assistants who work at the Center for Applied History do not work exclusively for the Center. In fact, when the Center was created, the History Department decided to continue the department's long-standing method of assigning graduate assistants to an individual faculty member who would then assign them projects relating to their own personal research or teaching. As a result, the Center currently has four graduate assistants who spend time at the Center, but most of their time is spent doing work for individual faculty members. Graduate Assistants must first complete all work assigned by their faculty supervisors, and if they complete all their assigned work, then they are supposed to devote their "free" time to projects at the Center for Applied History. As a result, the majority of graduate assistants' time has been focused on traditional research and teaching support activities for individual faculty members. The Center currently serves more as an office for graduate assistants than as a vibrant laboratory for public history work and exploration.

It is my hope that at least one of the graduate assistants will be devoted fully to public history projects undertaken by the Center in the coming year. We have debated making that graduate assistant the Research Director of the Center to better oversee the Center's work and operations, or having that graduate assistant focus on revenue-generating activities that could support additional graduate assistants who could then focus exclusively on Center work. We have also discussed the feasibility of sponsoring undergraduate interns at the Center.

I would be interested to hearing about how successful other Centers have been in raising funds through grants and fee-for-service work. Insights into the use of student interns would also be appreciated.

**3. If you are or were a director or administrator of a Center, what were the greatest challenges you faced? How did you keep the center vital to the university and to the department and program?**

As a co-director of the Center for Applied History, the greatest challenge I have faced is the lack of dedicated resources for the Center. The Center has no independent budget, and graduate assistants are not fully dedicated to the Center. My co-director and I perform our duties as departmental service, and we simply do not have the time to adequately plan and coordinate projects. The Center has accomplished some meaningful work, but much less than we originally anticipated.

**4. What should such centers offer to students? What role have students played in your center? Directors, please describe some successes and frustrations in working with students and students, please share your thoughts on how centers might meet your needs more directly.**

When we created our center, a key component of our original vision was that the center would provide students with practical experience in public history work. While many graduate students who worked with the Center for Applied History have gained hands-on public history experience, unfortunately, many others have not. For those who have worked directly on public history projects, the results have been quite varied. We have had students perform outstanding oral histories, develop innovative

interpretative tours, and perform high quality historical research. However, a few of the graduate assistants who worked at our Center were students early in their graduate careers who were still learning the work of public history. As a result, they did not perform professional quality work. On more than one occasion (for example with a recent National Register nomination being complete for a community organization), it became necessary for me to personally research and write a significant portion of the nomination because the student work simply would not meet the standards of our State Historic Preservation Office. Greater day-to-day interaction between the co-directors and the Center's graduate assistants would most certainly enhance the quality of the Center's work and ensure a richer learning experience for students.

**5. How does a university build successful collaborations with partnering organizations? How can centers more effectively meet the needs of the public history community? What are some of the challenges that we face in building these types of collaborations?**

I believe that personal relationships are the key to successful collaborations. Universities and prospective partners must devote the time to getting to know each other and their respective institutions, and particularly the goals and needs of each other. It is only through such conversation that universities and community partners can assess whether or not they have areas of mutual interest that can be served through collaboration. Moreover, a successful collaboration requires individuals on each side of the partnership who are willing to devote the time and energy to supporting the collaboration. Even organizations that may be well suited to helping each other will not succeed without the commitment of individuals who are enthusiastic about the partnership and willing to nurture and support the collaborative relationship.

Centers provide a way for universities to establish ongoing, substantive relationship with partners in ways that may not otherwise be feasible. For many collaborative relationships, one of the biggest constraints is the academic calendar. Ordinarily, if students are engaged in a project, the nature of that involvement is often limited to a single academic semester. If the collaboration is done as part of a class project, it can become challenging for professors to ensure high quality work. Centers allow us to sustain ongoing projects with collaborators, to hold students more fully accountable for the quality of their work, and to give them additional experience working in a realistic public history setting.

The collaborations described above are clearly envisioned as collaborations driven by a goal of service rather than entrepreneurship. However, I would be interested in hearing more from others about their successes or failures with fee-for-service work. I am very interested in the mechanics—specifically methods used to attract business, methods used for pricing jobs, and the demands on students and faculty engaged in such commercial work.

PUBLIC LANDS HISTORY CENTER, COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY  
MAREN BZDEK, PROGRAM MANAGER  
JANUARY 31, 2011

CASE STATEMENT FOR NCPH WORKING GROUP ON PUBLIC HISTORY CENTERS, PENSACOLA, 2011

The Public Lands History Center (PLHC) at Colorado State University serves to further knowledge of the history of America's public lands using our expertise in environmental history, historic preservation, environmental history, social history, museum studies, and cultural resource management. The PLHC formed in 2007 and I was hired at that time to serve as a research associate and administrator. I had just completed my M.A. in the department, which included a public history concentration. I bring the administrative and managerial skills I developed in the private and non-profit sectors to an academic institutional setting, and I am also a research associate for the PLHC, which allows me to continue to develop my historical research and writing skills. I work extensively with faculty members who serve as our principle investigators, as well as with graduate and undergraduate students contributing research to our projects. As the PLHC's director is very busy with teaching responsibilities and other research, I'm also the unofficial liaison to other units within the university and to our primary research partner, the National Park Service.

The PLHC is a recognized unit of the College of Liberal Arts. It functions independently, having its own by-laws, mission statement, and internal administrative structure. Although the PLHC is attached organizationally to the Department of History, historically it has worked directly with the Dean's Office in the College of Liberal Arts. The Associate Dean for Research serves in an ex officio capacity as an advisor to and an advocate for the PLHC. The Director is an Associate Professor and is the primary spokesperson and is responsible for overseeing the Center's affairs and implementing its mission. The Center's Program Manager provides administrative oversight and evaluation of the Center's Research Associates. The Director and Program Manager work with Research Associates and Faculty Affiliates to

determine responsibility for administrative oversight and evaluation of Graduate Research Associates and Student Interns. The Director issues an annual report to the Dean's Office and also sends a copy to the History Department Chair. Like all official units, the PLHC receives administrative support from various individuals within the university, including the Dean's Office, the Office of Sponsored Programs, Human Resources, Travel, and others. Recent budgetary constraints and cutbacks have impacted these relationships to some degree.

Funding for the Center comes from two primary sources: externally funded research projects and a five-year endowed chair position currently held by the Center's Director. In 2013, the PLHC may be fully funded from external projects. That scenario is far from ideal—before that time we hope to convince the university's central administration to provide permanent funding for a full-time administrator. That position allows our faculty affiliates to serve as PI on a project without having to take on all of the daily administrative and supervisory requirements. The position also provides continuity within a fragmented and decentralized university system.

To that end, we are working extensively with our Research Dean and others within the university to demonstrate the value of our work to our college and to CSU as a whole. Because CSU is a land grant institution, active engagement and cooperation with community partners is a core mission. Like many similar institutions, our university increasingly measures productivity in terms of research dollars brought in. Securing externally funded projects and convincing CSU that our work is an important and worthy contribution to the land grant mission that also meets the Carnegie definition of "engagement" are critical for our ongoing success.

To keep the PLHC vital to CSU and to demonstrate that vitality, we seek to describe first and foremost how it supports and enhances our college as a whole and the department's faculty and student interests. Clearly, the Center supports the existing public history curriculum because it provides an opportunity to apply classroom knowledge to public contexts. The PLHC staff provides technical and

intellectual support for public-oriented classroom activity as well as paid and volunteer research positions for students. Faculty members are able to convert our NPS research projects to journal articles and, in a few cases, full-length monographs. The PLHC also fosters creative working relationships among our permanent and temporary faculty. Our public history faculty conveys their knowledge to interested and sympathetic faculty members who would otherwise remain somewhat removed from applied history or collaborative research projects. Several faculty members have remarked that supervising National Park Service research projects has broadened their understanding of their own research interests by suggesting fresh questions and insights. Temporary or special administrative professional appointments have also expanded, which allows the department to offer additional resources in support of the public history program. We've hired several recent graduates in one- to two-year positions, providing a bridge to their permanent employment or income as they apply for Ph.D. programs.

As previously mentioned, the PLHC allows our department to provide funding for students through paid research contracts, which is a natural complement to the department's graduate teaching assistantships. Working on Center projects provides professional networking opportunities for our public history students and helps them launch their careers. We're attracting high-quality students, in part, due to the opportunities the Center provides. Our undergraduate students benefit as well, through their association with excellent GTAs in the classroom and, in some cases, through work experience on Center projects as hourly student employees.

When our students and research associates complete their projects, we ask them to complete an exit survey that gives them an opportunity to provide feedback about how the PLHC functions. These informal surveys indicate that students learn about ethical, methodological, and practical concerns associated with research and gain genuinely useful tools for dealing with people. Some have an opportunity to work with digital technology and software programs that broaden their skills set. They learn how to manage their time and "know when to quit" in order to meet the demands of their

research contract timeline. All leave their positions grateful for the experience and knowledge gained, as well as the financial support provided.

Problems with our research teams and projects arise on a regular basis, of course. Finding the right student(s), who can work for the full length of the project schedule, is always a challenge. Sometimes we have to pass the baton from student to student. Our faculty members put forth heroic effort to provide adequate supervision and advice for these projects. In some cases, students feel they receive enough guidance, but not always. Sometimes they have to work more independently than they, or we, would like. In part, this is because the additional workload for faculty is unrecognized in a formal way by the academic bureaucracy, although that is beginning to change. As well, the university's administrative procedures can be quite convoluted when it comes to the administration of grants and cooperative agreements. We have learned to be creative in many ways, to bend certain rules without breaking them, and through experience to anticipate potential problems when we take on new projects.

The motivation for all of that effort comes easily, on the other hand, because it is fueled by satisfying new relationships formed within the university and with our public partners. We at the PLHC believe we are providing services for public land agencies that allow them to engage in activities they could not otherwise afford to do. And it's not just history that we produce for them—many of our researchers go on to temporary and permanent positions in the NPS, the Forest Service, and other public agencies at all levels of government. Our cooperative projects with those entities are training ground for those future employees. One of our faculty members described this as doing a “public good” that gives back to our public lands. We believe that most of the key contacts at those agencies understand this, although they are often unaware of the practical constraints we face. If they have any concerns about working with students, it usually relates to their temporary availability and the possibility of turnover on a project before it is complete. We answer this concern with the argument that our administrative core provides continuity for project management, and that helps a great deal.

However our single biggest problem is that they are just as funding-challenged as are we. There are times when we simply can't find the money to move a project forward, despite good intentions on both sides.

It takes time to form relationships, and in the National Park Service employees move around quite a bit, which adds to the challenge. Our body of work is our best advertisement, and as it grows we are finding that more new projects land in our laps unexpectedly. We take every opportunity to present our research results for agency staff at the site, and at their internal research conferences as well as the George Wright Forum. We attempt to make contacts at every level of administration: park, regional, and Washington-level. When good projects come along and a university cooperator is needed, these contacts think of us and ask us to participate.

Finally, we ask our partners in public agencies and our colleagues in natural resource management and the sciences to ask themselves, "What is the value of history"? In these applied settings, history can be segregated from natural resource management, although we are noticing increasing efforts to integrate natural and cultural resource management. We encourage them to think about the ongoing interdependence of human and non-human elements within their managed landscapes—to see that even "natural" parks and landscapes have a human history. This is where environmental history and public history come together and it is where our greatest ambitions for influencing how history is applied in public settings lie.

Using Centers to Teach Public History and Engage Community Partners  
Case Statement Response  
Lynn Denton  
Texas State University  
January 31, 2011

Disclaimer: I am pleased to be a part of this discussion, but am only in the first stages of establishing a Center for our program. To date, we have identified our mission and goals and begun discussions with the University administration and outside funders. I proposed participating in order to get a better understanding of issues and concerns that such an undertaking may generate from those who have been down this road. So, my case statement responses will reflect this perspective.

1. As Director of the Texas State History Museum prior to joining Texas State, we worked with the Humanities Institute, a center within the College of Liberal Arts at UT-Austin, and the Center for Texas Music, a Center within the Department of History, Texas State University in the areas of exhibit planning and public programming. These collaborations helped address specific needs within the Museum ranging from scholarly input in formulating exhibit themes to identifying speakers and songwriters/performers. The Museum was one partner in a broad Humanities Institute effort to coordinate and communicate humanities programming and themes across university/state/city divides. The Museum and the Center for Texas Music History jointly organized a singer/songwriter series that was hugely successful, not only in popularity, but in establishing the Museum as a venue for examining the history and creative impulse for Texas songwriters. We found our center relationships to be productive and invigorating.
2. Since joining the History Dept. faculty, I have become most familiar with the Center for Texas Music History (CTMH) which is based in our department. The CTMH is directed by a tenured

history professor (with course release) supported by an administrative assistant paid with university funding. The Center Director organizes undergraduate and graduate courses in Texas Music History. CTMH is housed on central campus in a building with the Center for the Study of the Southwest. In addition to university salaries and space, the work of the Center is supported through grants, private donors, and fundraising events focusing on Texas Music. Among its many activities, the Center publishes a quarterly journal, has established an endowed book series, publishes CD's, holds campus concerts, and maintains a web site with teaching resources as well as program information. Regardless of all these activities, I watch the Center struggle with the perceptions of how its activities fit the mission of the University.

3. In planning our Center, I can already anticipate that the greatest challenge will be ongoing funding. At its founding, the Center for the Study of the Southwest successfully garnered a large challenge grant but had tremendous difficulty finding the full match. The need to coordinate through the University Development Office and to work in alignment with their overall development plan will be one component of this challenge.
4. Our goal is to provide a locus for real-time, practice-based opportunities for the graduate public history students by partnering with diverse private and public sector institutions and organizations. We envision being able to offer student employment as well as course project or independent research experiences. Currently, the opportunities are too complex and multi-faceted to be managed solely through my office. Transition and continuity is too difficult, and the possibilities for substantive and ongoing engagement are too limited. Moving forward will require clear a delineation of the Center's focus, scope and capacity for achieving this work. We

want to remain flexible and open to new opportunities without over-extending limited resources.

5. One of the primary difficulties in building collaborations between the university and partners here is the perception that the University will take the lead, and make whatever it is happen because you have unlimited resources to bring to the partnership. So, I see economies of scale as a challenge, articulating mutual goals and expectations clearly, and being realistic about how university calendars do or do not interlock with partner timelines and deadlines.

## Using Centers to Teach Public History and Engage Community Partners

Submitted by Jay Lamar, Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for the Arts & Humanities, College of Liberal Arts, Auburn University

1. Describe your experiences working with a center. Were you a student? Faculty member? Community partner? If you have worked with more than one center, please provide some background on all your experiences in this area.

I joined the staff of CMD CAH in fall 1988 as a temporary non-tenure track faculty employee funded by a statewide NEH grant. Since that time, I have served as the center's outreach program assistant, assistant director, and now director. I was funded by soft money (almost exclusively NEH statewide grant funding) for seven years. Originally, I was in charge of recruiting participating scholars and community partners for statewide reading-discussion programs (4 major grants over those years from NEH focusing on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Alabama literature, the Civil War, World War II, and looking at history through memoir, letters, and diaries), assisting with writing those grants, developing materials for the programs (including two center-created anthologies of readings and writings), and handling all the details of implementing the programs in locations throughout the state. Sometimes those details included persuading community partners that partnering with us was not scary, convincing reluctant faculty to participate (we drew from universities throughout the state and at the time it was not typical for faculty to actually go to a community), or sometimes even filling in when a faculty member forgot his program and went fishing. I also handled promotional materials and publicity, ranging from pitching stories to the media to writing and placing stories to designing the materials.

In recent years, my work has continued to include designing, implementing, and managing programs, fund-raising, overseeing a publication imprint with the University of Alabama Press, increasing our visibility, viability, and utility to AU students and faculty, managing staff, and meeting the administrative demands of a university office.

2. If you have worked in a center, describe the logistics of how the center functioned. Was it located within a specific department, or was it multi-disciplinary, and if so who were the university departments and programs involved? What kind of organizational structures did it employ? What resources did the university provide? How was the center funded? How did it fit the mission of the university?

The Center for the Arts & Humanities was established in 1985 as the outreach office for the Auburn University College of Liberal Arts, a corollary to our land-grant university's work in extension in the

sciences, engineering, and vet medicine programs. In 2006 it was named for former first lady of AU Caroline Marshall Draughon when her daughter endowed a renovation/addition project for the center's historic house.

The center's focus has always been small towns, rural communities, and locations that did not have opportunities or support to provide educational and cultural programming for their citizens. Initially the center worked primarily with public libraries and local history and heritage groups. In subsequent years, it has also worked with arts organizations, ad-hoc community history committees, junior/community colleges, among others.

Our working philosophy is founded on a deep commitment to partnership and to increasing partner capacity. A successful partnership is one that results in improved skills, increased awareness, and the confidence to proceed. Often it also means the creation of something that did not exist prior to the partnership: a history festival, an on-going discussion group, a book festival, and many conferences and symposia. For community partners successful relationships are built on trust, reliability, and being willing to meet them where they are. Most center programs include co-sponsors, and for programming partners, mutual support and good outcomes with shared credit are essential. Co-sponsors have included Alabama Historical Association, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Alabama Historical Commission, Alabama Writers' Forum, Alabama State Council on the Arts, Alabama Humanities Foundation, Alabama Library Association, and numerous others. Not only do these partnerships mean that more can be accomplished, but they contribute to a sense of community and shared purpose which can be the basis for future projects.

CMD CAH originally reported to the Vice President for Outreach and/or the director of Extension, as well as to the dean of Liberal Arts. In recent years, our reporting has been weighted more heavily toward the college. The center is a department distinct from the college's academic units; however almost all of our programs engage faculty in history, English, anthropology, music, art, and theater. In recent years, we have been able to recruit from foreign languages, sociology, psychology, and political science. We have also worked with faculty from wild life/biology, agriculture, environmental studies, and the university library.

Throughout the center's history, the university has covered salaries and space, an 1847 cottage at the eastern edge of campus. The center has a small operating budget, \$15,000, which does not always cover expenses. Most of the center's hundreds of one-time program and series have been largely funded by

extramural funds from federal and state agencies, public and private foundations, and other resources. Each proposal attempts to include some funding for operating expenses, but relatively few of its funding agencies pay indirect costs or overhead. Funders have included NEH, NEA, Alabama Humanities Foundation, Alabama State Council on the Arts, Alabama Power Foundation, National Park Service, and the Kettering Foundation, to name a few. For almost ten years, until 2010, our center was the home of the Alabama Center for the Book, the state affiliate of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. Although funding for the ACFTB was raised separately from the center, it was directed as a part of our programming and managed as a sister entity to CMD CAH. The center has also served as an incubator to other organizations, including the Alabama Writers' Forum and the Alabama Prison Arts & education Project, both of which are now independent entities.

The center has typically had a small staff—usually a director, an administrative assistant, and an outreach assistant, plus student interns and/or volunteers. At times the center has been more robust; at one time it boasted seven staff members, including one full-time volunteer. For the most part, staffing is dictated by funding (or lack thereof) and changing priorities in the dean's office. We work very hard.

Lack of staff and permanent, dependable funding are always issues. Overarching those are shifting attentions/priorities in higher administration. A dean or vice president can make or break a center, depending on his/her support.

3. If you are or were a director or administrator of a Center, what were the greatest challenges you faced? How did you keep the center vital to the university and to the department and program?

By far, the most persistent challenge for our center has been funding. Chasing money has often led us to implement more programs than anyone in their right mind would want to direct. And as rich and exciting as the variety can be, it also poses challenges to a small staff, as well as issues for devising a "sound bite" size explanation of who we are and what we do. We have tried to address funding and work-load challenges by developing endowments for programs that produce a stream of permanent funding. Currently, the center has three endowments. Two are quite small (\$25,000) and one, named for our founding director, is in development. None has yet paid out enough to be a dependable source for ongoing funding.

We have also tried over the last three years to focus our mission and programming to have a clear statement of purpose and mission, but also in part to shape engagement to the interests and projects of

faculty and students. For instance, AU is developing a vibrant public history program and discussions include how the center can partner with the program to benefit students, faculty, and communities. The college also supports a civic-engagement initiative. Although civic-engagement is not a perfect fit for the center's work, it does open up possibilities for community programming and engaging students.

Other issues include how to teach and pass on what the center does. The center's future is critically dependent on having an engaged generation to follow current staff. See question about students below.

Another issue that may not seem terrifically important but turns out to be vital to the future of the center is how to frame programs that reach an audience increasingly technologically sophisticated. Where the center once depended on face-to-face programs, which we feel are still the most successful, there is enormous potential for utilizing new technologies for distance engagement and learning.

Finally, the sheer number of good ideas and requests for programming challenge us. Were there world enough and time....

4. What should such centers offer to students? What role have students played in your center? If you were a student who worked in a center, what type of experiences were important and useful to you? Directors, please describe some successes and frustrations in working with students and students, please share your thoughts on how centers might meet your needs more directly.

The center has a lot to offer students: experience in public programming, pr and media internships, and academic content. At present, we host interns from Technical and Professional Writing, PR and journalism majors, student Civic Engagement fellows, and first-year MA students in English. We are also working with a history research consultant and history department faculty member to research the history of our building and its connection to the development of the town. We hope this will be a spring board to much more extensive involvement of students and faculty in public history projects. This is one of the most promising and rich avenues: students can gain expertise in outreach, connect their work to the public, and earn academic credit. Our experience with students is that they are more than willing and interested in such opportunities. However, as there is really no precedent for such a relationship at present, the challenge is making it meaningful and do-able for faculty.

5. How does a university build successful collaborations with partnering organizations? How can centers more effectively meet the needs of the public history community? What are some of the challenges that we face in building these types of collaborations?

The center has excellent connections to local, state, and regional history entities throughout the state, which provide an already well-established foundation for collaborations. These can certainly be further developed and nurtured, though hardly a week goes by that some community or individual does not contact us for assistance with community documentation, archival assessment, and other projects. Selecting appropriate partnerships, recruiting faculty and students, and funding are challenges. It is also sometimes challenging for partners to figure out how to work within an academic calendar and the constraints of classes, grades, and overloaded faculty. The center has enormous potential to be a partner to faculty and address some of the most time-consuming and demanding aspects of working with communities partners, especially serving as the “still point” in the whirlwind of academic demands. Accomplishing this is one of the center’s five-years goals.

## **Case Statement for “Using Centers to Teach Public History and Engage Community Partners”**

Leslie Madsen-Brooks  
Boise State University Department of History

**1. Describe your experiences working with a Center. Were you a student? Faculty member? Community partner? If you have worked with more than one center, please provide some background on all of your experiences in this area.**

I am a new faculty member at Boise State University, and the Center on Main is also a new facility—it opened fall 2010. Thus far I’ve begun teaching a graduate seminar there.

**2. If you have worked in a center, describe the logistics of how the center functioned. Was it located within a specific department, or was it multi-disciplinary, and if so who were the university departments and programs involved? What kind of organizational structures did it employ? What resources did the university provide? How was the center funded? How did it fit the mission of the university?**

The Center on Main is managed by the university’s College of Social Sciences and Public Affairs (SSPA) and is therefore host to classes and events sponsored by several different departments. (At Boise State, history is classified, at least bureaucratically, as a social science.)

Physically, the Center is located in a large-windowed storefront in an older but renovated building in downtown Boise. The center features a comfortable sitting area with locally relevant books to peruse or buy, a modest loft area with some seating and work areas as well as exhibit space on the walls, and a flexible small classroom space that seats about 30 students in rows of chairs or 16 people seminar-style around a table. During the day, the space is filled with light and is very welcoming. (It also features an eye-catching neon sign from a beloved local tavern.) The university also leases a small seminar room in a separate part of the building. The rest of the building is home to suites of offices leased by small businesses and other organizations.

The Center opened in fall 2010, but already it looks as if people from various departments are using it for open office hours—that is, blocks of time when students or members of the community can come in for conversation or consultation. The history department’s internship coordinator, for example, makes himself available for four hours on Fridays, and a representative of a student-run public relations firm also uses the space for consultations.

The Center also hosts “companion workshops” connected with the Fettuccine Forum speakers’ series. Recent topics have included sustainable regional food systems, refugee resettlement in Idaho, and the environmental history of the Civil War. In the summer, the Center is home to the intensive, ten-day “Investigate Boise” course that embraces a place-based approach to urban studies and civic engagement.

**3. If you are or were a director or administrator of a Center, what were the greatest challenges you faced? How did you keep the center vital to the university and to the department and program?**

n/a

**4. What should such centers offer to students? What role have students played in your center? If you were a student who worked in a center, what type of experiences were important and useful to you? Directors, please describe some successes and frustrations in working with students and students, please share your thoughts on how centers might meet your needs more directly.**

This is only my second semester at Boise State, but my initial sense is that students—both undergraduate and graduate—have been thinking a bit too narrowly about what constitutes public history practice. They tend to consider only the archival or museum professions or (more rarely) careers on the restoration side of historic preservation, unless they already have some experience in the field, in which case they might mention opening their own historical consulting firm. While internships in museums or archives may serve as excellent introductions to public history practice, for many students with broader interests in public history, they should be only a first step. As the Internet and mobile devices place easy-to-use apps in the hands of the public, students need to begin thinking about public history as being practiced *by* the public, not just *for* them.

A center, then, might recruit advanced undergraduate or graduate students for public history internships that bring students into contact with a broad spectrum of projects emerging from local organizations or individuals. I envision students and interested faculty participating in what some might call “open office hours,” but what I prefer to call a “history shop,” along the lines of the “science shops” in Europe, where members of the public can get assistance with projects that interest them and are significant to their communities.<sup>1</sup> In a science shop, laypeople learn from scientists how to investigate, for example, whether there is a cancer cluster in their neighborhoods or how to balance human desires with ecological imperatives. In a history shop, members of the public might find the resources for neighborhood-scale digital history projects, learn how to conduct oral history interviews, or get help nominating a property for the National Register of Historic Places. Instead of faculty at the university initiating projects, the lay public would be able to take leadership positions in preserving, documenting, and sharing local and regional history. In exchange, the university gains access to a world of ephemera, architecture, and local knowledge that previously might have been inaccessible.

Such internships and collaborations in a history shop might be even more valuable if they embraced digital literacy as a goal for both the interns and members of the public who sought assistance from the center. In my experience, Boise State’s students are neither early adopters nor particularly experienced in contributing content to digital platforms beyond Facebook. As both the practice and presentation of public history become increasingly reliant on digital tools, it is important that Boise State students become conversant in such technologies. Accordingly, I envision the Center on Main becoming a hub of thoughtful technological innovation for local public history projects.

So, for example, a member of the public (let’s call her Maria) might come to the history shop for advice on how to best document neighborhood history (perhaps for personal reasons, perhaps to help establish an historic district). Students would connect Maria with specific staff at the municipal archives

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the Science Shop at the University of Waterloo in Canada: <http://scienceshop.ca> and the international science shop network, Living Knowledge: <http://www.scienceshops.org>.

as well as with the historical society, and then would help her plan the next steps in her project. Maria might return to the history shop with documents she would like assistance interpreting. Students would help her make sense of the documents, and might help her scan them into digital files. If Maria was interested, students might help her set up a blog to showcase her research—which might include maps, photographs, and oral histories—or even help her get started with creating a simple database and digital exhibit using Omeka. Perhaps students have already created a larger Omeka database of local history, and they ask Maria if she'd like to add her materials to it. They might also encourage Maria to contribute her knowledge to the Boise Wiki's collection of articles on the city's history.

Ideally, these internships would be supported by grants, but students at Boise State are already quite willing to accept unpaid internships to get meaningful professional experience. Perhaps there might be an alternate model of funding, with members of the public paying for workshops or a quarterly pass to the history shop's digital resources.

**5. How does a university build successful collaborations with partnering organizations? How can centers more effectively meet the needs of the public history community? What are some of the challenges that we face in building these types of collaborations?**

One of the best ways for universities to partner with local organizations is to place bright, motivated interns into high-quality, intellectually challenging internships at those organizations. Facilitating internships that go beyond scanning and data entry is key to not only better professional experience for students, but also helps the partner organizations see the university's students as a rich repository of skills and knowledge.

In the case of the history shop, I would hope the partnering organizations would include historical societies, museums, libraries, and archives, but also organizations that serve, for example, Boise's large refugee communities, collaborate with schools, or provide care to senior citizens. The Center on Main would continue to serve as a place where students could seek public history internships inside traditional historical organizations and might become a place where these organizations could seek additional help with projects. But I think the history shop's primary purpose would be to raise the historical literacy and engagement of members of the community.

One of the biggest challenges to this new paradigm is that local history organizations' funding has been cut dramatically and layoffs of both support staff and department heads has become routine.

Accordingly, museums and similar organizations are looking for self-directed interns who learn basic skills quickly and are willing to do low-status, low-skilled, monotonous work like scanning documents and data entry. Departmental internship coordinators—I will be the history's internship coordinator beginning this fall—will need to be especially assertive about ensuring high-quality student learning experiences in the face of such paid labor shortages.

In some sense, though, the history shop offers a space for students to craft their own internships and pursue their own interests alongside the public. Imagine if every history intern graduating from Boise State not only had a good deal of facility in navigating online databases, finding and interpreting documents in municipal archives, and conducting oral histories of local residents, but also had digital fluency (the ability to set up and maintain blogs, wikis, podcasts, and more), grant-writing skills, and the related entrepreneurial skills that come with building and bootstrapping new projects and programs. Some interns might even emerge from their undergraduate or graduate programs having taught themselves PHP or other programming languages. These graduates not only would make themselves more attractive in a lean public history job market, but also would have skills that would translate to other sectors of their lives—their faith communities, children's schooling, volunteer work, and hobbies—and would thus be able to enrich their communities in countless ways.

Laura Fowler, Ph.D.  
Working Center Case Statement  
January 31, 2011

Working with history centers.

**1. Describe your experiences working with a Center. Were you a student? Faculty member? Community partner? If you have worked with more than one center, please provide some background on all of your experiences in this area.**

I want to enter into this working group because I am interested in creating a center for public and local history at my university, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. I am a faculty member in the department of Historical Studies, Graduate Program Director, and Director of the Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Museum Studies. I see a great need for a Center for Public and Local History that would encompass a variety of inter-disciplinary departments and centers already in existence at SIUE. Currently, we have an active history department with a post-baccalaureate certificate in museum studies and a master's program in history. Students at both the graduate and undergraduate level engage in local history as the foundation for their senior research assignments and as topics for master's theses.

**2. If you have worked in a center, describe the logistics of how the center functioned. Was it located within a specific department, or was it multi-disciplinary, and if so who were the university departments and programs involved? What kind of organizational structures did it employ? What resources did the university provide? How was the center funded? How did it fit the mission of the university?**

This proposed Center for Public and Local History would be run by the Department of Historical Studies but would involve participation from the University Archives, University Museum, Center for Digital Media, Urban Research Institute, and the departments of Anthropology, history, and political science. Since this is merely a proposal, I do not know what resources the university can provide or how it can be funded, but am interested in learning about how other Centers function. The closest model we have at SIUE currently is our new Center for Digital Media, which is interdisciplinary and funded through the College of Arts and Sciences Dean's office. There is the potential for outside local funding, but it would not be sustainable.

This Center would fit directly into the mission of the university by connecting university resources and expertise to the larger communities of St. Clair and Madison Counties.

**3. If you are or were a director or administrator of a Center, what were the greatest challenges you faced? How did you keep the center vital to the university and to the department and program?**

The greatest challenges this center would face would be to ensure that all parties worked together to ensure access to the collections. SIUE is currently trying to open access to the University Museum collections but the University Archives remains limited and difficult. Many of the current collections are uncataloged and unknown to the larger university community. Many local historical groups and concerned citizens in the area also seek SIUE Museum Studies work on local histories and museum projects, but without access I cannot ensure that their collections would be safe at SIUE.

I also think that there are a number of people working separately throughout the University without knowledge of each other's projects. I just learned about a semi-private collection of Manhattan Project materials collected by a Political Science professor, which has its own reading room. Some collections are digitized through the library but not advertised through the Archives website. A Linguistics study is using interviews conducted by Museum Studies students to understand dialects in southwestern Illinois, but that connection and collaboration was almost a fluke. A Center could help join forces and provide a central repository for current research so internal AND external scholars could benefit. As in many universities, the library is run by a different dean than the College of Arts and Sciences and each unit has their own set of priorities.

**4. What should such centers offer to students? What role have students played in your center? If you were a student who worked in a center, what type of experiences were important and useful to you? Directors, please describe some successes and frustrations in working with students and students, please share your thoughts on how centers might meet your needs more directly.**

The greatest benefit this center would have is to current undergraduate and graduate students. Students could engage in research, process collections, and understand the role of the university in the greater community. The largest goal would be to have a standing work-study position and a graduate assistant assigned to the Center, as well as technology support and materials. This would offer a continual learning opportunity for students in an employment situation as well as those utilizing the Center for research.

**5. How does a university build successful collaborations with partnering organizations? How can centers more effectively meet the needs of the public history community? What are some of the challenges that we face in building these types of collaborations?**

Since the Museum Studies Program opened in 2003, the community desire for public history programs is overwhelming and difficult to satisfy. We have explored the history of the Croatian Community in Southwest Illinois, created museum exhibition scripts, helped with formations of local historical societies, and have most recently been involved in a five-year project to interview Illinois residents about unique objects they have in their home. The Center would be a fantastic place to showcase these findings and the oral histories conducted by students over the years. The Croatian project in particular yielded a number of donations to the University Archives, which add to an already substantial collection of eastern European and Slavic materials. The University Museum collaborates regularly with local galleries and especially the Southwestern Illinois College's William and Florence Schmidt Art Center to put University objects on display. The University has a strong following in the area and it's emphasis on Illinois history is vital to helping this project move forward.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Fowler, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor  
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

Charles Romney  
History Department  
University of Arkansas at Little Rock

Using "Centers" to Teach Public History and Engage Community Partners  
Case Statement January 2011

I am the coordinator of a Masters Degree in Public History at my university, and as coordinator I have different roles in running our "Center," the Arkansas Studies Institute. This Institute is a partnership between the University of Arkansas at Little Rock and the Central Arkansas Library System (the public library for the region around Little Rock). The institutional basis of the Arkansas Studies Institute is complex: the name refers to a building about four miles from the main university campus that houses parts of the university (the university archives and part of the public history program), parts of the public library (archives, public programs, and exhibition space), and other academic and community partners (the Clinton School for Public Service, the Arkansas Humanities Council, etc). The funding for this particular Center is less complex. The university pays rent on its part of the building and pays for the budget of the archives and its staff while each of the other partners pays rent and salaries. Some people working in the building exist on grants run through the public library, and the Public History Program and the public library system plan to apply for grants together that would pay for projects in the Arkansas Studies Institute building. Already most graduate courses in Public History meet at the Center's three main classrooms. My university administration currently sees this Center as an important part of the University's own mission: the Center provides access to the public, makes connections to community partners, and encourages fund raising.

Students use the Arkansas Studies Institute for classes and as Graduate Assistants. Every public history student in the university's graduate program takes classes at the Center, and many applied courses link the material in the classroom to the diverse types of public history that exists in the building. A few students enjoy a much closer relationship to the Center. This semester four students work as Graduate Assistants in the Arkansas Studies Institute. The university pays tuition and a stipend to Graduate Assistants, and the students work twenty hours a week in one of the different public history groups inside the Center. These students tell me they see the Center as their educational and professional home: their Center badges and access cards become their professional identity, an identity reinforced by the classes they take at night at the Center. The Graduate Assistants illustrate the best of the Arkansas Studies Institute: these students experience public history as a combination of academic study and applied practice.

The theory and practice of public history at the Arkansas Studies Institute suggests a way to think about the possibilities and challenges of running a Center as a partnership between a university and a community organization. The Center exists because of its role at both the university and the public library. The Public History Program continuously tries to tie work at the Center to academic and community priorities. Inside the university I work with the office of extended programs to fund our classes, advertise our program, and expand our potential group of graduate students. I talk with the university administration to make sure our public programs at the Center mesh with the university's goal of engaging the local community. I also try to align our work at the Center with the mission of the Central Arkansas Library system. I meet with public library archivists to connect public history programs to their collection plan, their goals for public programming, and their intense focus on increasing the number of library users.

I see three main challenges to the continued success and even existence of our Center: institutional identity, work culture, and independent funding. The Arkansas Studies Institute currently exists as a building housing the programs and activities of different organizations. Within the building people always identify themselves by their affiliation: university or library. The threat to these separate identities lies in the leadership of the two institutions. For now the university and library administration both support the Center, but what happens with new administrators take over both institutions? The Center might seem less valuable as an important part of the mission of each institution and instead just appear as a budget line on a spreadsheet that can easily be cut. Currently people who work at our Center have two views on how to solve this problem. Some advocate keeping our distinct institutional identities and making new connections within both the university and the library. For example I would try to create stronger ties to the graduate program on non-profit management and to the office of extended programs. Others advocate creating an institutional identity of working at the Arkansas Studies Center itself. For example I would try to get grants and create projects that do not run through the university but instead exist only on the budget of the Center.

The question of institutional identity also reflects a more evasive but equally important challenge: work cultures. University employees and Library employees have different patterns of work and different approaches to solving problems. To give a trivial but oddly important difference in schedules: our university shuts down for two weeks during the winter holidays around the new year, but this is a crucial period for the library to remain open. The library wants to schedule public programs at this time, but the university mandates that employees not work during that period. This difference in schedules masks an even greater difference in solving problems. Our university wants to create a series of "joint committees" to hash out the difficult issues in running our partnership. The library staff cannot understand these committees--to them getting a large number of people in a room to talk about things will not result in any work toward solving the problem. Advocates line up on both sides of this "work culture" divide as in the divide over institutional identity. Some want to extend their particular work culture into the Center, while others want to eliminate the divide over work culture by creating one single work culture.

This debate over the two possible futures for the Arkansas Studies Institute entails two different possible futures for funding. Those who want to extend the relationships between the Center and the university and library argue that deeper ties to all facets of both entities will ensure funding for the future. If those in the building stay in the building, these advocates claim, the university and the library will not see the Center as an integral part of each institution's mission. Those who want to create a single Center seek independent funding: a budget for the Arkansas Studies Institute that does not rely on either the university or the library but instead funds itself. Only financial independence, these advocates warn, will ensure the Center continues to exist when the current university and library leadership shifts to other goals. The Arkansas Studies Institute has thrived by fitting in with the mission of two distinct but complementary organizations. Our Center faces the question of whether to expand the ties within each partner organization, or whether to create an independent Center with its own institutional identity, work culture, and financial budget.

Will Walker  
Assistant Professor of History  
Cooperstown Graduate Program  
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Case Statement: Using “Centers” to Teach Public History and Engage Community Partners

**1. Describe your experiences working with a Center. Were you a student? Faculty member? Community partner? If you have worked with more than one center, please provide some background on all of your experiences in this area.**

I am currently a faculty member working at what could be called a “public history center,” although that is not its official title. The graduate program in which I teach is operated as a partnership between the State University of New York and the New York State Historical Association (NYSHA), which includes a research library and two museums. Located adjacent to the museum campus, the program uses the museums and historical association as a laboratory for student training and a base for community outreach. In collaboration with NYSHA staff, students and faculty are involved in projects ranging from art exhibitions and living history programs to History Day and teacher workshops. They conduct research in special collections on local history and architecture and participate in oral history projects that build the historical association’s archives.

The greatest benefits accrue to the students. Unlike at many institutions where students must go off-campus to gain practical experience working in the community, our center provides a home base in which students can get involved in almost any type of museum work. The initiative still lies with the individual students; however, most, if not all of them actively embrace multiple opportunities for enrichment. As a faculty member, I also benefit immensely from being a part of this “center.” My most successful endeavor so far has been the creation of an ongoing oral history project. It combines current student research from my oral history course with the digitization of older materials from NYSHA’s collections. All of this content is currently being collected on a website that I have developed in collaboration with students. Beyond oral history, my connection to NYSHA has led to an involvement in multiple volunteer opportunities, the writing of grants, and the organizing of conferences. In addition, perhaps most importantly, the “center” provides outstanding enrichment for my courses, including access to a rich trove of material culture.

**2. If you have worked in a center, describe the logistics of how the center functioned. Was it located within a specific department, or was it multi-disciplinary, and if so who were the university departments and programs involved? What kind of organizational structures did it employ? What resources did the university provide? How was the center funded? How did it fit the mission of the university?**

The New York State Historical Association is a private, not-for-profit organization. Thus, our “center” is a public-private partnership that has lasted for almost fifty years. The graduate program is the only academic department connected to the “center”; however, all SUNY-Oneonta faculty members have access to NYSHA’s museums. (As far as I am aware, few actually take advantage of this perk.) The university makes an annual payment to NYSHA for the use of their facilities and the services of their staff. In addition, several senior staff members teach courses as adjunct faculty. The curator of the Fenimore Art Museum, for example, is our art historian, and the education director of The Farmers’ Museum teaches museum education.

The question about mission is an interesting one, because for many years the graduate program did not fit well with the overall mission of the college. SUNY-Oneonta was an institution focused primarily on undergraduate instruction. In recent years, however, this has changed. The college administration has placed more emphasis on graduate studies, befitting the institution's designation as a comprehensive college within the SUNY system. The college's president and other administrators recognize the national stature of the graduate program and view it as an important exemplar of the college's distinctiveness.

The program's director and faculty work hard to cultivate relationships with our colleagues at the college. Because the graduate program is located on a satellite campus twenty-five miles from the main campus, this can be difficult—particularly in the middle of winter. Nevertheless, faculty members from the program routinely visit the main campus for committee meetings, search committees, and other engagements. As a result, our colleagues see us as an integral part of the college.

**3. If you are or were a director or administrator of a Center, what were the greatest challenges you faced? How did you keep the center vital to the university and to the department and program?**

I am not the director or administrator of the center.

**4. What should such centers offer to students? What role have students played in your center? If you were a student who worked in a center, what type of experiences were important and useful to you? Directors, please describe some successes and frustrations in working with students and students, please share your thoughts on how centers might meet your needs more directly. Centers should offer students a wide range of practical experiences in the field of public history. Because students often do not know exactly what type of job they would like when they graduate, they should have the opportunity to try different things. A student who has lots of experience working with museum collections, for example, should be able to try fundraising or education. Centers should be tools for creating well-rounded public historians who are comfortable working in a range of contexts.**

At our "center," students have done everything from the low-level work of providing safety patrols at large events to more advanced tasks such as writing grants and hanging exhibitions. Despite the students' relative inexperience, faculty and museum staff members treat them as professionals. They are not expected to do routine, front-line duties.

**5. How does a university build successful collaborations with partnering organizations? How can centers more effectively meet the needs of the public history community? What are some of the challenges that we face in building these types of collaborations?**

I doubt that the type of relationship our program has with NYSHA could be created today, particularly not in a large state university system. Because we have been collaborating successfully since the 1960s, however, the program continues with strong support from SUNY. That being said, the partnership is not without its challenges, and it requires careful management to maintain an effective working relationship.

In this time of increased financial strain, the budgets of both SUNY and NYSHA must be taken into consideration when planning activities. In addition, communication between the two institutions, although extremely cordial, can sometimes be less than transparent. It is very difficult to keep everyone on the same page. In this regard, and in other areas as well, strong leadership is essential to the maintenance of a successful partnership. Keeping all parties involved focused on the mission of the program and center—to train creative, entrepreneurial museum leaders committed to generating programs and services for the public good—has been the key to a productive relationship.

In this working group, I would like to discuss issues related to leadership and mission. Should public history centers follow the same best practices that we recommend for other cultural institutions? What are the ethical issues involved in providing student labor for tasks that might be performed by paid employees? How do we adequately and accurately assess the benefits and drawbacks of such centers? What can be done to change or improve longstanding centers that are set firmly in their ways? How can we best train junior faculty to take over leadership of these centers in the future?

Ann McCleary  
Director, Center for Public History  
University of West Georgia

**1. Describe your experiences working with a Center. Were you a student? Faculty member? Community partner? If you have worked with more than one center, please provide some background on all of your experiences in this area.**

My primary involvement is as founder and director of the Center for Public History at the University of West Georgia. The idea evolved from a substantial local research project that we undertook at UWG not long after I came here in 1997. With funding from the Georgia Humanities Council, we conducted a year-long project in which we interviewed about one hundred local residents, engaged eighth grade students in the oral histories, worked with photography students to document the county, and created a very popular exhibit and series of public programs to showcase our work. Afterwards, with boxes of fieldwork stuffed in my office and in the department mailroom, my department chair and I went to the Dean to ask if we could create a center. He supported our idea, and the Center for Public History was established in 2000. The Dean gave us the use of a classroom and funding for two graduate research assistantships each year. We drafted a mission statement that illustrated how we would fulfill the mission of the university, the college, and the department, and sought to gather the resources we needed.

Since then, the Center has grown dramatically. We now have more space, and we will soon be moving into remodeled space in the university library in a partnership with the university's special collections, the Thomas Murphy Center for Public Service, and the Georgia Political Heritage Project. We have also created a Center for Civic Engagement to serve as an umbrella organization for our various entities, though we still need to flesh out more about what we will become when we move into the new library facilities. Also, our department has added a second public history position who now helps to direct the Center.

**2. If you have worked in a center, describe the logistics of how the center functioned. Was it located within a specific department, or was it multi-disciplinary, and if so who were the university departments and programs involved? What kind of organizational structures did it employ? What resources did the university provide? How was the center funded? How did it fit the mission of the university?**

Our Center for Public History is part of the History Department, though we also collaborate with other departments. For example, we have worked with the department of Sociology on some oral history projects and with photography students in the Art Department in various documentary projects. Most recently, we have worked directly with the University Library, especially in developing an exhibit on Thomas B. Murphy for our newly-renovated library. We continue to reach out to work with other disciplines, as projects and funding allows. We have established a Public History Committee in the department to help keep communication open between the Center and the department.

University funding for the Center has been minimal. The Dean's office still provides support for from two to three graduate research assistantships each year. The University also provides IT support and some computers. The Department pays our telephone bills and allows us use of the department copy machine, though we do have a smaller one at the Center. Most of our resources for supplies and equipment have come from outside funding, through grants, private donors, and other supporters. We

have of late taken advantage of the technology fee program at the university to obtain digital recording equipment and are currently applying for funding for a digital media center and new computers as we move into the library. Our Center is available for all history students, and others interested in what we do, so we argue that this technology is keeping our students trained in the most up-to-date equipment that they would need to use and understand on the job.

The outside funding that we raise provides support for graduate and undergraduate students to work in the Center. We incorporate support for graduate research assistantships in every project that we request. As a result, we currently have 2 ½ positions funded by the University this year and seven positions funded by outside support. We also apply for funding through the university for undergraduate research assistants, and this year we have two students in these positions who work closely with graduate students on projects. In addition, the last two years, we have requested and received a federal work study position. Last, we provide some paid but mostly unpaid internships for both undergraduate and graduate students.

Our two directors are faculty members who do not receive any course release for their work in the Center. Occasionally, we have used grant funding to “buy out” a class and pay an adjunct and thus allow us to spend more time on an important project. We can, however, use these public history projects as part of our promotion and tenure portfolio. Our department utilized the NCPH/OAH/AHA guidelines for “publicly-engaged scholars” to craft our new promotion and tenure guidelines, which now recognize our work at the Center not only as “service” but also as teaching and professional development. The creation of this Center became my major professional product for promotion to full professor.

**3. If you are or were a director or administrator of a Center, what were the greatest challenges you faced? How did you keep the center vital to the university and to the department and program?**

We face several challenges. The first is the time that is required to direct the Center. All of the projects require direction from a faculty supervisor, and the co-director and I divide the projects between us. Still, we spent a considerable amount of time each week directing the work of graduate and undergraduate students. We do this, in part, by holding our office hours at the Center. But the time involved is substantial and can be draining at times, especially given our regular course load of classes. There is more that we would like to do (create a community advisory board, for example) that we simply do not have time to undertake. We would love to have even a part-time position that serves as an assistant director. This year, we have designated one of our positions to help us, and she has provided excellent service, but she also is in charge of another grant-funded project. The likelihood of acquiring funds from the university to hire an M.A. student as a full-time staff person is unlikely, given the recent rounds of State budget-cutting that have impacted our university.

The second issue is funding. Besides the graduate research assistantships, we have no permanent source of funding for the Center. We are always looking for funding. Sometimes, we create a project and search for funding. Sometimes, we take on a project for which there is funding available. We still need to create a more permanent stream of operating support than we currently have. With the increasingly budget cuts over the past few years, obtaining such funding from the university appears to be unlikely at the present time.

We believe that we meet the mission statements of the university, college, and department. The university is very supportive of what we do, as we provide very good press for the community. We have occasionally received some additional funds from the Provost’s office.

**4. What should such centers offer to students? What role have students played in your center? If you were a student who worked in a center, what types of experiences were important and useful to you? Directors, please describe some successes and frustrations in working with students and students, please share your thoughts on how centers might meet your needs more directly.**

We believe that the Center for Public History offers the practical work experience that our students need. We consider ourselves a learning laboratory to teach skills and knowledge in the practice of public history. We describe our graduate students as co-collaborators with us, assigning them an appropriate title, and we try to give them a sense of ownership over the project. When we have undergraduates helping on a project, we ask the graduate students to help supervise these undergraduate students and thus provide more experience in working as a team. Overall, we believe that the way we have crafted our student positions in the Center has been very successful. Our students have told us that the experiences they have had at the Center have helped prepare them for their jobs.

Still, even though our students are collaborators, they require supervision. Some students clearly work more independently than others. We get frustrated by students who need constant supervision, because this requires more time on our part. We ask our students to treat the position as a job; they create a work schedule for their time at the Center, they record their hours daily, they complete weekly updates on their projects, and they prepare semester reports on what they have accomplished. One area in which we could definitely improve is in completing our end-of-the-semester evaluations of the students on a more timely basis, but we do provide constant evaluation throughout the semester.

We would love to engage more undergraduate students in our work, but we also know they require more time for supervision. That is one reason why we try to assign them to a project with a graduate student: the grad student can help supervise, and we think that working on a team with a grad student also provides additional opportunities to develop mentorship between not only the faculty member and student but with the graduate student and undergraduate student. Often, this mentoring process works quite well.

**5. How does a university build successful collaborations with partnering organizations? How can centers more effectively meet the needs of the public history community? What are some of the challenges that we face in building these types of collaborations?**

We work closely with a variety of local and regional organizations to create partnerships. Sometimes, when we create a project, we establish these partnerships; other times, we work with other organizations to build partnerships and to help advance the community's or organization's efforts. For example, over the past several years, we have worked closely with the City of Bremen which wanted to establish a community museum, and we helped develop partnerships with the Georgia Humanities Council, the city schools, and other community organizations.

One of the challenges of doing any community or regional public history project is that you create relationships with people, and those relationships require time. Even after a project is done, the community members with whom you have worked still view you as a partner and a friend and they want to continue to be involved with you or your students in some way. For them, the project does not end with the grant is finished. Trying to sustain those relationships again requires time. One positive element of these relationships, however, is that graduate and undergraduate students build lasting friendships with these community members.

Another frustration is that many communities want help but have little funding to support it. We have to weigh carefully what we, as directors, can do. When funding is available, we think first of using that money to hire a graduate student or sometimes an undergraduate student to assist them. When there is no funding, we try to squeeze out some time from our university-paid graduate students, if that is possible, and sometimes it just is not. But many communities have no funding and additionally do not understand the cycles of the academic year in which we work. With our responsibilities at the Center, my co-director and I struggle to assist local communities. We would like to do more outreach, but we are constrained by time.

This summer, the Center will be moving into much nicer space in the newly-renovated university library, with the three other public history related organizations I mentioned earlier. The idea between this new collaboration is that we would like to work together more closely in civic engagement activities. I am anxious to see how this new partnership will evolve, and if having a more permanent space in the university library might help to advance our collective cause.

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NCPH Case Statement

“Using Centers to Teach Public History and Engage Community Partners”

When I was a second semester graduate student at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) working on my MA in Public History, I received an assistantship at the Albert Gore (Sr.) Research Center. The Gore Center primarily served as an archive of the former U.S. Senator’s and other Tennessee politicians’ papers, historical documents and oral histories related to the history of Middle Tennessee, and a rather large “equestrian” collection. I worked there twenty hours a week, mainly assisting patrons, transcribing oral histories, and creating finding aids. I appreciated the job, but there was another archive on campus that focused on culture and “popular music,” which better fit my research interest in music history.

The Center for Popular Music (CPM) maintained no relationship with the history department. Rather, it associated with the mass communications department (recording industry/music business). At that time, the CPM had little money and offered no assistantships. Yet, after some maneuvering, I convinced the graduate history director to fund my assistantship in the CPM and started work there the next semester. My supervisors in the CPM decided to utilize my experience as an audio engineer and computer technician, charging me with logging a series of interviews with Mississippi blues artists in the 1960s, creating digitized clips of the audio, and developing an online delivery system. They gave me significant latitude within the archive and allowed me to develop my own projects. This very rewarding experience ended with my summer graduation.

I also worked as a digital archivist, helping to administer a 10,000-item server and hosted version of the ContentDM software for *Digital Initiatives*—the archival arm of the James Walker Library

Media Center. My duties included scanning documents and photographs, entering the scans as digital objects, inputting metadata, and building and administering the [Warm Springs Collection](#) on the hosted version of ContentDM. I also worked with a local county historical society in creating the [Farms of Cannon County, Tennessee Collection](#) and played a significant role in creating a partnership between *Digital Initiatives*, the Gore Center, and the History department by initializing the [Stones River Historic Landscape Collection](#). Currently, I am a second semester PhD candidate in History at the University of Mississippi. Thus far, I have not directed a center.

Located in the Liberal Arts Building, the Gore Center operated under the History department (I believe). Historically, the director was a tenure-track History professor and the graduate History department routinely funded two assistantships. The Gore Center also provided several undergraduates a work-study opportunity. Its simple organizational structure consisted of the director and a full-time archivist. While the director dictated policy and steered the management of the collections, he rarely visited the center, preferring to solicit grant funds and new accessions for the archive; the archivist managed all day-to-day activities. By centering its collections on Tennessee politicians and university history, the Gore Center enhanced “knowledge through research” and furthered the university’s commitment to its rich history of “teaching and public service.”<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, it offered “resources to encourage research, creative activity, and service,” which fit with the mission statement of the university. I helped over 100 undergraduate history students utilize the Gore Center’s collections and use primary source material to learn about the history of the university while composing a research paper.

Established in 1985 as part of a state-funded “Center of Excellence” program, the CPM is an interdisciplinary archive and research center located in the Mass Communications building at MTSU.

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<sup>2</sup> Middle Tennessee State University, “Mission Statement,” [http://www.mtsu.edu/about\\_mission.shtml](http://www.mtsu.edu/about_mission.shtml).

When I began my assistantship in January 2010, the CPM employed a director, two archivists, a librarian, an audio specialist, and an administrative assistant. The duties of most employees dealt with archival management and patron assistance, but the director mainly conducted research on American musical culture and published scholarship. While once a formidable fundraiser and organizer of conferences, lecture series, and radio documentaries, after twenty-five years he had lost touch with the local community and allowed the CPM to become somewhat introverted and antiquated. Although never involved directly with teaching, its resources supported undergraduate, graduate, and faculty research for different departments of Liberal Arts and Mass Communication. For its first quarter century, the CPM operated outside the purview of the university, but upon the director's retirement in April 2010, it formally associated itself with the Mass Communication department. The digital audio project that I completed while working there went online in July 2010, becoming the first archival material from the CPM available on the internet.

The co-founders of *Digital Initiatives* created the Digital Media Center "to support the academic mission of the University" and provide "an integrated, technological, innovative" educational experience for students and the community.<sup>3</sup> The *DI* team consisted of a site administrator, a project manager, a cataloging librarian, an administrative assistant, and me. While they all worked for the library and university, my salary came from grant funds, as did all initial project funding. My supervisors allowed me significant freedom here as well, and by using the hosted version of our archival entity to create a collection of my research, the Public History department noticed the possibilities of digital archives and eventually secured a large grant to continue developing the university's digital collections.

One frustrating issue at the Gore Center stemmed from professors requiring hundreds of undergraduates to visit each semester. In the two weeks before their paper deadline, students flooded

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Also, see James Walker Library, "Digital Media Studio Policies," <http://library.mtsu.edu/digitalmediastudio/policies.php>.

the research room and put hands on numerous fragile documents—repeatedly. While the assignment did serve the mission of the university and evidence the center’s usefulness, it also caused concern for the longevity of the materials. Digitization was one solution.

The digitization and online delivery of a center’s materials can help build successful collaborations with organizations and effectively meet the needs of public historians and educators. By transcribing important interviews and documents and developing a searchable index, these collections streamline the process of research. The online availability of high-resolution images, audio, and video allow visitors from all over the world to visit the center; several blues researchers in England recently utilized the CPM’s online content.

I believe that centers have to make themselves useful to the community. In my experience, those with the capabilities and technical experience to provide opportunities not typically available in history circles have success in navigating the politics of collaboration. Yet, the close proximity of the centers at MTSU also instilled a sense of competition, specifically concerning accessions and grant funds. Each center had its own identity, apart from the university and each other. Each held as strong a desire to distinguish itself as it did for supporting the mission of the university. I eventually worked several centers at MTSU, partly because of their common interest in technology.

NCPH Statement Using Centers to Teach Public History

Pensacola, FL (2011)

Courtney Tollison (Furman University and Upcountry History Museum, Huff Center)

My own personal experiences through internships in college and graduate school with institutions such as the National Museum of American History and the South Carolina Military Museum have convinced me of the great benefit of partnering an undergraduate history program with experiences in a center for public history, museum, archive, etc.

As a liberal arts college which focuses on the concept of Engaged Learning (a “problem-solving, project-oriented, experience-based approach to the liberal arts”), Furman University consistently seeks and creates innovative opportunities to engage students in learning outside the classroom. In 2007, a regional history museum opened approximately five miles from the Furman campus. Prior to opening, the Upcountry History Museum approached administrators at Furman University with the hope of attracting greater university involvement with the Museum. The result was the formation of a joint position which carries a reduced teaching load in the History Department at Furman and position at the museum known as Museum Historian.

I assumed this position and have used my joint role to establish internships which have involved students in oral history projects, exhibit design, the publication of a photographic history of the region

during World War II, a documentary, public programs, artifact accessioning, and myriad other endeavors. The students enjoy the opportunity to practically apply the content knowledge they have gained in a more traditional classroom setting. These opportunities make good students better and more engaged; my experiences with them suggest that projects that will receive public support and/or recognition, or ones that will be preserved for generations to come (such as an oral history) motivate students in ways that traditional classroom projects often do not.

As Historian, I direct the research agenda, the internship program, the oral history program, and develop in-house exhibits. During any given semester, the museum has, on average, 3-4 interns from Furman and 1-2 from other institutions of higher education in the area. Furman has provided substantial financial support in the form of sponsorships annually, donated computers for intern use, and serves as a go-to for myriad institutional needs. The only frustrations experienced have been typical: feeling torn and overwrought between two work sites, and feeling challenged by a lack of museum resources.

This relationship has been a winner for the community, the Museum, Furman, and perhaps most importantly, the students. Currently, at the Museum's request, the university is researching ways to become more involved with the Museum. Efforts to brainstorm what a closer relationships might look like, and what the benefits of closer collaboration might be, are underway.

In this effort, we are asking ourselves: To what extent does the mission of the university intersect and further the museum's mission and vice versa? How can students outside the History Department (Education, Communications, Accounting, etc.) benefit from a closer relationship with the Museum? To what extent does the university have a responsibility to nurture civic and cultural organizations in the community? Because the university exists on more stable financial footing and has a long and well respected reputation in the community, can the university better afford to present a more nuanced perspective on local history, and one that may in fact challenge the traditional narrative of the community's past?

Another factor in this undertaking is to rejuvenate and repurpose another organization based at Furman which has been dormant for several years. The Huff Center for Piedmont History is an umbrella organization established to showcase student research in local history approximately ten years ago.

While active for several years, especially in efforts to engage students in research and projects involving the museum's permanent exhibits, the Center has been inactive since the opening of the History Museum. It has a small endowment. The director and I are currently brainstorming ways to repurpose the Center in a way that complements and does not compete with the Upcountry History Museum.

Two plausible proposals exist at this time: one is for the Huff Center to serve as the research arm of undergraduate involvement in local and public history. In this model, the Huff Center remains based at Furman, but the research the students engage in will yield public history outcomes (exhibits, public programs, oral history projects, documentaries, history tours, K-12 programs, etc.). Another model has the Huff Center assuming physical space at the Museum, so that the Center becomes the area of the Museum responsible for research, oral history, and in-house exhibit development.

One such challenge of the second proposal involves governance of a Center based in the History Department but housed in a community organization. The university will undoubtedly need to earmark increased funds to support this endeavor. Does this arrangement extend beyond the boundaries of the departmental level? Another challenge involves raising funds for a local and public history center without detracting from resources that may also benefit other areas of the university and/or the museum; significant cross-fertilization exists between the university and the museum's supporters.

From this working group, I hope to contribute my experiences but also hope to learn about best practices at other institutions. I hope to learn about other models of public history centers in an effort to more acutely develop an idea of how best to propose closer university-community partnerships.

Furthermore, I hope to be exposed to innovative projects that have and could be developed through the use of public history centers designed to benefit undergraduate students and the community.