



Call for Working Group Discussants
2019 NCPH Annual Meeting
Hartford, Connecticut
March 27-30, 2019

Working groups, involving facilitators and up to fourteen discussants, allow conferees to explore in depth a subject of shared concern before and during the annual meeting. In these seminar-like conversations, participants have a chance to discuss questions raised by specific programs, problems, or initiatives in their own public history practice with peers grappling with similar issues. Working groups articulate a purpose they are working toward or a problem they are actively trying to solve and aim to create an end product(s), such as a report, article, website, or exhibition. For 2019, eight working groups are assembling:

1. **Building *The Inclusive Historian's Handbook***
2. **Repairing National Register Nominations: the Struggles and Challenges of Maintaining Accurate Documentation in a Changing World**
3. **Early Career Public History Academics: Questions, Issues, Resources**
4. **Making Radical Repairs: How to Tell an Inclusive Story when your Collections are Stuck in the Past**
5. **Listening Is Emotional Labor: Self-Repair and Community Care**
6. **Economic Justice and the Ethics of Public History (Part II)**
7. ***Interpreting Our Heritage* in the 21st Century**
8. **Repairing Historic Sites: The Successes and Challenges of Working Under and with Consortia**

To join a working group, please [fill out the form](#) describing the issues you wish to raise with your peers, together with a one-page resume, CV, or biographical statement, by **October 15**. We welcome submissions from individuals across a range of professions and career stages. Please see the specific working group descriptions below. Individuals who are selected will be listed as working group discussants in the conference *Program* and will participate in the working group session at the annual meeting.

Expectations: This winter the group facilitators will ask discussants to contribute a 500-1,000 word case statement. The case statement will describe a discussant's particular experience, define the issues it raises, and suggest strategies and/or goals for resolution. Case statements will be circulated among participants by email and posted to the NCPH website. Discussants are expected to read and comment briefly by email on one another's case statements well before the conference date. Some working groups may also have additional shared background reading materials identified by their facilitators or may choose to open up case statements for wider public input.

To apply: Please fill out the [discussant application form](#), making sure to select which working group you are applying to join. (You may apply to participate in a working group whether or not you have submitted another presentation or session proposal. You may apply for only one working group.) All presenters, attendees, working group discussants, and other participants are expected to register for the annual meeting within six weeks of acceptance.

Apply at <http://ncph.org/conference/working-group-discussant-application/>

1. Building *The Inclusive Historian's Handbook*

Facilitators: Sheila Brennan, Independent Historian
Bill Bryans, Oklahoma State University
Modupe Labode, IUPUI
Kimberly Springle, Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives
William Walker, Cooperstown Graduate Program, SUNY Oneonta
Robert Weible, Independent Historian

The editors and advisory committee of *The Inclusive Historian's Handbook* invite discussants to participate in the process of developing this exciting new digital resource co-produced by NCPH and the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH). The goals of the *Handbook* are to open the practice of history for diverse communities of practitioners and directly support inclusive and equity-focused historical work in public settings. Working group discussants will provide specific feedback on a selected group of existing entries. They will also assist the editors and advisory committee in brainstorming future entries and provide suggestions on how to connect the *Handbook* with particular audiences who may find it useful in their practice.

Throughout the process of developing the *Handbook*, the editors and advisory committee have strived to model an open, collaborative, and inclusive process. This working group will enable our team to continue inviting a wide range of scholars and practitioners to contribute to the project and to solicit valuable feedback that will strengthen the final product.

Goals for this working group include:

- To collect specific feedback on a selected group of existing entries from *The Inclusive Historian's Handbook*;
- To gather suggestions and recommendations concerning future entries, including ideas for topics/themes as well as authors;
- To explore ways of connecting the *Handbook* to specific communities of practitioners;
- And to discuss the advantages and risks of creating this as a digital and open access resource.

2. Repairing National Register Nominations: the Struggles and Challenges of Maintaining Accurate Documentation in a Changing World

Facilitators: Jennifer Betsworth, New York State Historic Preservation Office
Heather Carpini, S&ME
Joanna Doherty, Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission
Sarah Kautz, Preservation Long Island
Michelle Lee McClellan, Ella Sharp Museum

Historic preservationists focus our efforts on managing change at historic buildings and in our communities. These same dynamics are at play in the foundational documentation that we often use to argue for the significance of those resources. In the more than fifty years that have passed since the creation of the National Register of Historic Places, documentation standards, programming needs, and our practice as historians and historic preservationists have changed. To move forward successfully, it is essential to balance repairing and updating old nominations with shepherding through new ones.

Old historic district nominations, many of which include minimal information, have periods of significance that end before World War II, or have poor mapping, directly affect property owners and

communities who work with these programs on a daily basis. In addition, many structures or districts have significant ties to other historical narratives, such as women’s history, African-American history, segregation and Civil Rights era history, LGBT history, immigration history, or poverty history that were never addressed within the original text. The addition of one or more of these contexts may alter what is considered historically significant.

This working group seeks to bring together State Historic Preservation Office staff, consultants, members of historic preservation commissions, community groups, educators, students, and others who have worked to update National Register nominations—especially those for historic districts—or who have struggled with insufficient documentation. While every case will have its own particularities, there is much that we can learn from approaching them in the aggregate. The group will grapple with these challenges and share strategies that have resulted in a stopgap or full fix (and what has not). Each participant in the working group will contribute a case study or studies that are representative of different challenges and approaches to updating nominations.

Questions for discussion include:

- What can State Historic Preservation Offices and the National Register program do to simplify the process?
- When has collaboration worked, and how can local groups and municipalities obtain the tools to lead the way?

The efforts of this working group will result in a list of best practices and strategies that State Historic Preservation Offices, nonprofits, consultants, educators, and communities can follow as we confront, use, and update old documentation to achieve contemporary preservation goals in our daily work.

3. Early Career Public History Academics: Questions, Issues, Resources

Facilitators: Torren Gatson, University of North Carolina-Greensboro
Jennifer LeZotte, University of North Carolina-Wilmington
Mary Rizzo, Rutgers University-Newark
M.J. Rymysza-Pawlowska, American University

Stemming in part from developments in the larger structures of academia, more history departments are creating undergraduate and graduate tracks in public history. Because of the realities of the academic job market, it is often likely that new hires in public history programs come to their positions from different regions, face complicated retention, tenure, and promotion standards, and take on extensive administrative responsibilities that can involve picking up existing projects, negotiating the infrastructures of multiple academic units and local organizations, and bringing in funding for projects and students. Where are the professional resources and networks for these kinds of challenges? And where are the structures of accountability that protect junior faculty embarking on public history careers?

New and recently hired educators also come into their positions with a unique set of opportunities. Often we are brought in by administrators and senior faculty as “innovators” and are invited and able to make significant additions and changes to programs (there are, of course, challenges here as well). Or, we come in on a foundation of significant work done by our senior colleagues, to established and robust programs where the issue is less making a case for the importance of practice and more about

continuing to work to be more inclusive, sustainable, and relevant. What kinds of opportunities are offered to new-career educators and how to best take advantage of them?

Issues for discussion include:

- Advocating for diversity, accessibility, inclusion across recruiting and admissions, programs, coursework, and partnerships as early-career academics
- Advising and graduate training for public history educators and more generally, the academic job market in public history and allied fields (museum studies, public humanities, etc.)
- Early-career mentorship, tenure cases (documenting and building a file, working within departmental or unit-level constraints, especially those that allow for public/creative activity)
- Learning the ropes/best practices in program administration and quickly learning to navigate complicated and often idiosyncratic bureaucracies inside and outside of the university. These skill sets vary, but likely include internal and external fundraising
- Building relationships with communities, practitioners, organizations in new places

4. Making Radical Repairs: How to Tell an Inclusive Story when your Collections are Stuck in the Past

Facilitator: Carrie Villar, National Trust for Historic Preservation

Dive into the nation's historic collections and it soon becomes clear that there is an (over)abundance of objects stashed away in the storage areas of our museums, historic sites, and historical societies across the country. This legacy of collecting has preserved the past, but who's past? Many of these collections were founded to preserve the history of the dominant culture and do not reflect the full story of the people at that site or in that community. While public history organizations are embracing telling the fuller story, it often comes at the expense of object-based storytelling because the material culture simply does not exist within the collection.

So what is to be done? History organizations have only so many resources, which often are insufficient to even care for the existing collection, let alone enough to seek out and acquire new objects. But to increase parity and balance, don't we need to do just that?

Facilitated by the Associate Director of Museum Collections from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, this working group will gather discussants, whether curators, collections managers, historians, or others, who are grappling with these issues at their organizations, discuss what has been working and what has not with real-life case studies from their own institutions, and brainstorm ways that the field can tackle the issue of ensuring their collections reflect the diversity of their stories. At the end of the conference, the participants will have begun drafting a manifesto and best practices guidelines that will help the greater public history field.

Questions for discussion include:

- How can the public history field and our organizations benefit by improving representation within collections?
- How do we determine what should be preserved? Deaccessioned? Acquired? Loaned?
- How should resources get allocated?
- How to communicate these changes to stakeholders?
- What groups should be including in the conversation that we aren't now?

5. Listening Is Emotional Labor: Self-Repair and Community Care

Facilitators: Diana Lempel, Practice Space Design Studio
Sady Sullivan, Oral History Consultant
Marieke Van Damme, Cambridge Historical Society

This working group hopes to bring together public historians working in diverse disciplines of the profession to discuss the role listening plays in our work and in the emotional labor of our work, and to consider ways to value and emphasize this listening work as we engage both with our professional communities and in the communities we serve and interpret. Starting from feminist theories of "care," the oral history principles of reciprocity and generosity, and sociological studies of "emotional labor," we will discuss how to claim listening as an expertise, nurture it as a caring practice, and value it as a professional skill, whether practiced within organizations, in collaboration with publics, or in the course of research.

Facilitators Diana Lempel, Sady Sullivan, and Marieke Van Damme have all been tackling aspects of these questions in their recent work. In her workshop "Listening is Emotional Labor," Lempel has brought together humanities practitioners, clinical workers, and service and hospitality workers to discuss how listening functions in their fields, and to consider how to better value, nurture, and repair the work that deep listening requires in any setting. Sullivan's course "The Impact of Listening and Being Heard: Oral History, Archives, & Advocacy," and her chapter in the recent anthology, *Beyond Women's Words: Feminisms and the Practices of Oral History in the Twenty-First Century*, both tackle themes of community care and listening. Van Damme's ongoing projects for the museum field, specifically "Joyful Museums," emphasizes the importance of museum worker happiness and self-care as structural and institutional priorities.

The working group will operate as a think-tank, with ideas presented by the facilitators based on their own work and the case studies of the discussants to begin, some group listening exercises, and then small group discussions tackling different topics.

6. Economic Justice and the Ethics of Public History (Part II)

Facilitators: Rachel Boyle, Newberry Library
Dan Ott, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
Stella Ress, University of Southern Indiana

Pre-accepted Discussants: Catherine Fleming Bruce, Tnovsa Global Commons
Rachael Finch, Historic Franklin Masonic Hall Foundation
Nichelle Frank, University of Oregon
Kimber Heinz, Bull City 150, Duke University
Jess Lamar Reece Holler, Caledonia Northern Folk Studios
Theodore Karamanski, Loyola University Chicago

At NCPH 2018, the working group Economic Justice and the Ethics of Public History undertook an ambitious agenda of grappling with economic justice and the ethics of public history. By the end of the session, it became clear that the specter of capitalism lay at the center of all our discussions about economic justice and ethics in public history. After all, public historians are not outside capitalism's peculiar power to obscure inequity, patriarchy, and racial discrimination as "natural market forces." For example:

- In public history, providing history for a “client” pays the bills; money and power warp inclusive narratives and intellectual freedom in institutional and consultation settings.
- Tuition dollars drive the universities and their history departments to create public history programs offering training for jobs that are in short supply.
- In academia and at our NCPH conference, we preach amazing inclusive and empowering best practices that are not always welcome in the workplace, nor do they always pay living wages.
- Even before this current administration and this 115th US Congress, budgets for the humanities across the nation and in many of the states have been stubbornly stagnant or have even declined.
- Moreover, funding from private foundations and donors often comes with restrictions that inhibit truly transformative projects.
- And profits from inclusive heritage tourism locales usually end up in deep pockets that have the capital to commodify the past, rather than with the communities that lived the history and would most benefit from the opportunity.

Since NCPH 2018, the group’s discussants have evolved and coalesced around an action-oriented agenda that focuses on 1) developing peer resources for professionals negotiating the workplace and improving standards for ethical public history training; 2) exploring alternative economic models for public history practice – like community co-operatives and community benefits agreements; and 3) creating a public history guild or union with standards for professional conduct and remuneration. After months of productive conversation online, the group will re-convene at NCPH 2019 to report on our progress so far, welcome feedback and discussion, and map our movement forward.

7. *Interpreting Our Heritage in the 21st Century*

Facilitators: Allison Horrocks, National Park Service
Nick Sacco, National Park Service

For more than sixty years, Freeman Tilden’s *Interpreting Our Heritage* has been widely relied upon by many historical interpreters as a benchmark text. Despite major changes in disciplines such as history and anthropology—and interdisciplinary areas such as museum studies—Tilden’s work is still frequently assigned, shared, and used by public historians. What’s more, even as updates to the original and new editions have been published over the preceding years, Tilden’s principles seem to still remain at the core of much of what is taught today about interpretive practice.

This working group seeks to discuss the context in which Tilden wrote *Interpreting Our Heritage*, and especially the extent to which he was called in to “repair” aspects of National Park Service practice through the NPS Mission 66 Program.

Questions for discussion include:

- Can these tools designed for repair in that period still be useful today, or are these ideas also in need of repair?
- To what extent is Tilden actually used as a foundational document in training interpreters and public historians?
- To what extent are Tilden’s ideas still in practice?

In the end, we hope to revisit Tilden with an eye to creating a new set of principles suited to the needs of contemporary interpreters.

8. Repairing Historic Sites: The Successes and Challenges of Working Under and with Consortia

Facilitators: Libbie Hawes, Cliveden of the National Trust
Craig Stutman, Delaware Valley University
Carolyn Wallace, Cliveden of the National Trust

Northwest Philadelphia is home to the Germantown neighborhood, boasting three centuries of historic significance from the Colonial Germantown National Historic Landmark District to the streetcar suburb of Tulpehocken to an epicenter for Civil Rights activism and African American culture. Today, there are 16 active historic sites interpreting diverse stories under the banner of Historic Germantown. The facilitators of this working group have seen both successes and failures at shared governance, staffing, site management and public outreach as the consortium adjusts and evolves in an attempt to network the sites. We seek to assemble a best practices and common struggles working group based on historic sites that operate within consortia.

Questions for discussion include:

- Is there a standard consortium model out there that seems to work best?
- How have adjacent (either geographically or thematically) historic sites and museums work(ed) together in the past and the present?
- How are the needs for both collaboration and competition balanced, when trying to obtain funding, attract visitors, market programming and maintain historic buildings while operating under a consortium?
- How do organizations work together with different management models and varied levels of capacity?
- What shared resources can consortiums capitalize on? How can benefits be distributed equally or in proportion to capacity between member sites?
- Does a loose model for oversight work best, or does a model where a consortium plays a more active role attain better results?
- What successes and challenges do historic sites operating within consortia face?
- How do various consortia structure their organizations to aid and assist such sites, and conversely, how do sites that participate in consortia get the most out of these partnerships?
- What structures or systems of contribution are used to engage member sites to contribute (financially, in kind, intellectually, etc.) to the consortium?
- In what ways does working together (site-consortium, site-site) benefit partner sites?

For this working group, we invite members of both consortia and those who work at sites either under or with consortia to share their stories of successes and challenges. We are interested in representatives from consortia of all sizes, local, state, regional and national. The goal of the session is to create a best-practices model for how to best develop and manage (from the consortia's perspective) and work in (from the participating site's perspective) these partnerships.