

## PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS: WHAT CAN I SAY?



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As my time as NCPH President nears its end I have been reflecting on my comments here in *Public History News* while pondering a far weightier task that lies ahead of me. The past two years certainly have not been what I, or any of us, envisioned or expected. But what I did know going in was that I would be writing these quarterly columns, and that come March of 2022 I would deliver a presidential address at our annual meeting. As a result, one question has nagged me on a regular basis—what am I going to say?

Writing these columns has done at least two things for me. First, it has reinforced that sinking feeling that time keeps passing faster and faster. It seemed that as soon as I finished one piece, three months had passed and it was time for the next! Second, it has given me a newfound respect for the folks

who do this kind of thing all the time; the journalists, columnists, and op-ed writers who face hard, recurring deadlines. Admittedly, they don't always succeed in saying something noteworthy, but I cannot help but admire their ability to write efficiently under pressure. I wish I could be better at that.

I do hope that you found something interesting and valuable here. When I first considered these short pieces, I sketched out a map in my head for all eight. That plan quickly went in the wastebasket. Most of my columns stemmed from the unprecedented and unpredictable times facing the public history community, and in the end, I only wrote about a couple of the topics that I had initially intended to address. Introducing you to my dear mentor, the late Floyd O'Neil, was my favorite. Yet if the quarterly columns could be a challenge, they turned out to be a good experience, and their immediacy helped to keep me on track.

The presidential address is a whole different ball game. I have now had almost two full



Bob Weyeneth (right) passes the NCPH gavel to Patrick Moore (left) after giving his Presidential Address in Monterey, California at the 2014 NCPH Annual Meeting.

years (four if you count my time as vice-president) to fret about it! Moreover, the stakes seem much higher. What can I say that is original and meaningful when so many smart and thoughtful people have preceded me as NCPH President? NCPH Executive Director Stephanie Rowe assured me that I am not the first to feel this trepidation. That made me feel only marginally better.

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## GUIDE TO PUBLIC HISTORY PROGRAMS UPDATES COMING!



NOAH NOBBE / NOAHNOBB@IU.EDU

When I began my internship at NCPH this August, I learned that my first major project would be reworking the *Guide to Public History Programs*. The *Guide* (<https://ncph.org/program-guide/>) is described as a free, comprehensive resource for prospective students with standardized formatting to make it easier to compare resources and practices, whether at graduate or undergraduate levels. Schools are searchable by program type, degrees offered, program strengths, and location. I actually used the *Guide* when researching graduate programs, so I already had a fair idea of what it was. But to decide where it needed improving, I needed to dive into the details. After reviewing past conversations on the topic and brainstorming with the NCPH staff, I drafted an overview document featuring all the possible changes being considered, including expanded

program information, expanded degree/strength options, and layout. This document is currently being reviewed by the Curriculum and Training and New Professional and Student Committees.

After evaluating the *Guide* in its current form, I considered what might be important to add. For example, being able to identify online programs would be helpful, especially after the past two years of the pandemic, as NCPH staff has noted an uptick in email inquiries about online programs. I came up with more than enough possible additions but had to gauge which would be the most beneficial; we don't want to discourage anyone looking to submit their program with an overwhelming number of blanks to fill in. Our goal is to incorporate information that programs want to present and that students need to make an informed decision.

After maneuvering the *Guide* and its search filters, I found another opportunity for change: the specification of "other" entries. Of course,



**GUIDE**  
TO PUBLIC HISTORY  
PROGRAMS

in a database filled with programs from across the world, not every degree is going to match the selectable options we have. Our current options are only for degrees in History, Public History, or History with a Certificate or Concentration in Public History. For a public history organization, this seems perfectly fine. However, the second-most selected degree selection is "other," behind only a BA in History. And of those, over half were for a degree in Museum Studies. After recording the results for each, I also noticed that half of those museum studies program entries were created only for a Museum Studies degree. To fix this concern, there are many possible solutions from which to choose. Would it be best to include an umbrella "Museum Studies Degree" category, or should each level of

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Denise Meringolo, University of Maryland Baltimore County

## Secretary (one candidate for one position)

Edward Roach, National Park Service

## Board of Directors (six candidates for three positions)

Christopher Cantwell, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

B. Erin Cole, Historian, Artist, and Independent Museum Professional

Cheryl Dong, University of Northern Iowa

Laura Miller, Independent Historical Consultant

Kristyn Scorsone, Rutgers University-Newark

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## Nominating Committee (four candidates for two positions)

Richard Anderson, Humanities Action Lab, Rutgers University-Newark

Evan Faulkenbury, SUNY Cortland

Hilary Green, The University of Alabama

Sarah Marsom, Heritage Resource Consultant



Suffragettes and petitions (LOC), Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA. LC-B2- 2698-14.

Full candidate info at <http://bit.ly/NCPH2022Slate>.

Current board and committee members are listed at <http://bit.ly/NCPHcommittees>.

Ballots and candidate statements were distributed by email to members on November 8. Please contact [ncph@iupui.edu](mailto:ncph@iupui.edu) if you are a member and did not receive an electronic ballot. The election closes **January 15, 2022**. Your vote counts!

## Welcome New Members!

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# ACTIONS OF THE NCPH BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*This summer and fall the board convened electronically and took the actions listed below.*

*At the June virtual meeting the board took the following actions:*

- Approved the minutes of the Spring 2021 Virtual Meeting.
- Approved an amendment to the bylaws to create a new Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) standing committee.
- Approved a series of amendments to the bylaws to separate the Secretary/Treasurer position into two separate positions with separated duties, and to allow the Treasurer to be reappointed by Board vote for a second term.
- Voted to renew the term of current Secretary/Treasurer and have the incumbent continue to serve both roles until an election is held for a separate Secretary.
- Reviewed a member and staff proposal for changes to the awards slate and directed staff to refine and resubmit a proposal.

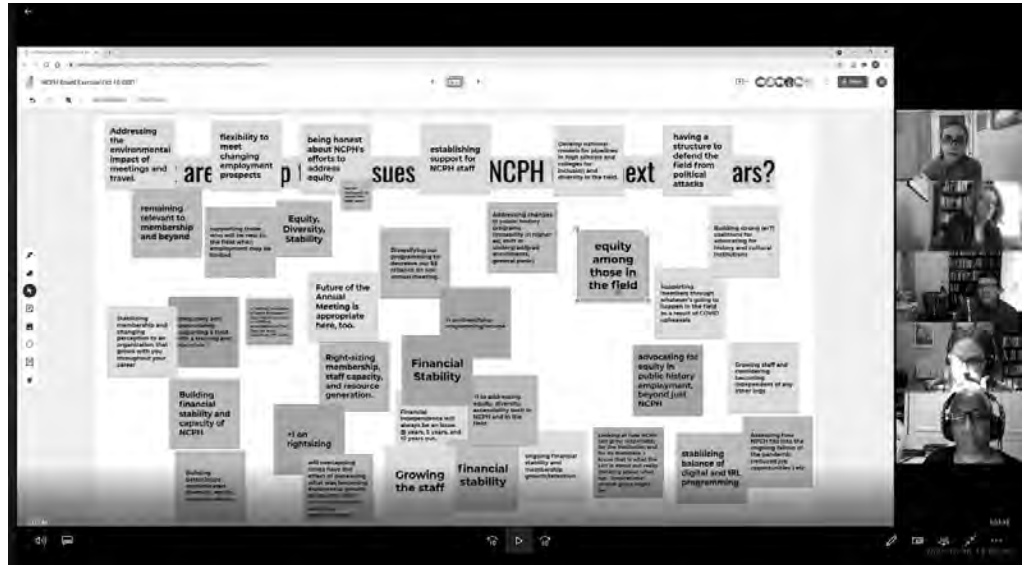
*Between the June and July virtual meetings the board took the following actions:*

- Approved signing a one-year Memorandum of Understanding with NCPH's host institution, the Indiana University School of Liberal Arts on the campus of IUPUI.

*At the August virtual meeting the board took the following actions:*

- Approved the minutes of the June 2021 Virtual Meeting.
- Heard an update on planning for the 2022 NCPH Annual Meeting and formed a focus group to support future planning for the in-person and virtual offerings.
- Discussed changes to the awards program, including possible creation of a new local Grassroots Public History Award and adjusting award amounts for the Outstanding Public History Project Award to recognize two projects—one for a small institution and one for a large institution.

*In September 2021 the Executive Committee met with other members of the Board to discuss the work of the 2022 Annual Meeting Program Committee and a concern that had been raised by committee members, and again to discuss renewal of NCPH's Memorandum of Agreement with the IU School of Liberal Arts at IUPUI.*



Long Range Planning Committee co-chairs Abby Gautreau and Will Stoutamire joined the Board of Directors at the Fall 2021 Zoom meeting to facilitate long range planning exercises to gather the Board's vision for the future of NCPH.

*At the October virtual meeting the board took the following actions:*

- Approved the minutes of the August 2021 Virtual Meeting.
- Engaged in an exercise to review the organization's Mission, Vision, Values, and 2017-2022 Long Range Plan.
- Discussed the work of the 2021 Program Committee.

*At the October 16, 2021 Virtual Fall Board Meeting the board took the following actions:*

- Heard reports from the President and Executive Director.
- Reviewed the organization's finances.
- Approved the 2022 operating budget.
- Approved the 2020 financial audit and form 990.
- Engaged in an exercise to determine key goals for the organization in the next Long Range Plan.
- Discussed fundraising for 2021-2022.
- Heard reports from *The Public Historian* Editor and *The Public Historian* Co-editor/Digital Media Editor.
- Approved creation of a new Grassroots Public History Award to be given annually to a project or organization located in the region in which the annual meeting will be held.
- Discussed process for annual reviews of the Executive Director, *The Public Historian* Editor, and *The Public Historian* Co-editor/Digital Media Editor.

*At the November virtual meeting the board took the following actions:*

- Approved the minutes of the October Virtual Board Meeting.
- Brainstormed about the future of the NCPH annual meeting.

*During this time, the Advocacy Committee of the Board also voted to endorse the following:*

- A statement on Florida law (HB233) allowing recording in the classroom from the Middle East Studies Association.
- A Joint Statement on Legislative Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism and American History from the American Association of University Professors, the American Historical Association, the Association of American Colleges & Universities, and PEN America.
- A statement on threats to historical integrity in Texas from the American Historical Association.
- A letter to the the Governor of Missouri to act to reinstate the exhibition *Making History: Kansas City and the Rise of Gay Rights* at the Missouri State Museum at the Capitol.

# PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS: WHAT CAN I SAY? // CONT'D. FROM PAGE 1

I concluded that my first step should be determining exactly what all those smart and thoughtful people had said. While I had heard nearly a third of the addresses in person, my memory is not that great, and so being, well, a historian, I headed to the archives. In this case the archives being the twenty-nine presidential addresses published in *The Public Historian*, beginning with Jack Holl's in 1985. The exercise was illuminating but also a bit daunting. Again, all those smart people saying insightful things.

While I do not want to diminish the diversity of perspectives expressed and it is impossible to summarize them all here, taken as a whole the presidential addresses do present a common theme: the nature of public history as a reflective practice. Rebecca Conard took this up most directly in her 2003 presidential address, but it has been an undercurrent of most if not all the others. As public historians we should always reflect upon and learn from our engagement with our community partners and clients. NCPH presidential addresses have by and large done just that. Personal journeys have been a part of nearly all presidential addresses. Not in a self-indulgent kind of way, but rather because learning from our experiences is central to our growth.

In the early years the "keynote address" or "Chairman's (sometimes 'Chair's') Annual Address" (the position was relabeled "president" in 1991) often focused on defining our field(s), considering current and future challenges, or assessing the divide between the "academic" and "public" practice of history. These topics are unsurprising considering that public history as a self-conscious, "named" field was relatively new and our organization was so young. Over time more general assessments of the state of the field became less common. Even so, these addresses were reflective in nature and rooted in personal experience.

Indeed, it is the individual experience of past presidents that I found most engaging. Sometimes their personal journeys have been placed in the context of actual voyages. Such was the case for Jann Warren-Findley, who used her experience as a Fulbright Fellow in New Zealand to address the globalization of public history practice. And in 2012, Marty Blatt used a trip he took with his daughter to Heidelberg as well as his broader family history to better understand the landscape of Holocaust memory in Germany.

Bob Weyeneth's talk at the 2014 Monterey meeting was one of my favorites. Bob related

some of his adventures doing public history, which in one case included threats to his personal safety when he engaged the "dark past" of a community's history. Bob concluded by challenging public historians to showcase the dynamic, interpretive nature of our work. He asked us to "pull back the curtain" and invite the public in to see how we work, to "share the trade secrets" as a means to bridge the distance between historians and their publics. The talk got me thinking about my own projects and inspired me to organize a session the following year which Bob graciously agreed to comment on.

So, what will I say? I guess I need to figure that out soon. I do know that I will address some of the challenges and opportunities that face public historians. I also know that it will be personal. And I hope that it will be meaningful for our members as Bob's was for me. But whatever it is exactly that I do say, I really look forward to saying it *in person* this March in Montreal!

*-Gregory E. Smoak is the President of NCPH and is director of the American West Center and Associate Professor of History at University of Utah.*

## NCPH COMMITTEE UPDATES

*These updates give a sampling of what NCPH volunteers are doing for the organization and the field of public history. The committees encourage your input throughout the year; committee chairs and members can be found at <http://bit.ly/NCPHcommittees>.*

### ADVOCACY COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD

Since last fall, the Advocacy Committee of the Board has been a forum for consultation regarding a dozen statements issued or endorsed by the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors. In back of those actions is thoughtful group discussion and a shared drafting process for statements originating with NCPH, like the September 2021 letter calling on the Governor of Missouri to act to reinstate the exhibition *Making History: Kansas City and the Rise of Gay Rights* at the Missouri State Museum at the Capitol. In the coming year, the committee is charged with reviewing the NCPH Advocacy Policy, last revised in 2017. The 2017-2022 NCPH Long Range Plan calls for exploring the "feasibility of partnering and collaborating with other humanities/history practitioners" (Pillar 5, Goal C, Activity 2), and this is another charge for the committee. We look forward, soon, to a conversation with the National Humanities Alliance and, we hope, others to come. The committee welcomed three new members in 2021. We invite those who may be interested in participating in the committee's work to please be in touch.

*-Submitted by co-chairs Melissa Bingmann and Michael Brown*

### BOARD-LED SUBCOMMITTEE ON GENDER DISCRIMINATION AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The Gender Discrimination and Sexual Harassment subcommittee has been making progress on its three areas of focus (resources, policies, and data) on these issues in public history.

The resources team has compiled and vetted resources for Public History Practitioners, Consultants, Educators, and Students. These resources, which are available at <https://ncph.org/publications-resources/for-practitioners-and-consultants/> (under General Resources), include websites, blog posts, articles, and books and will help managers develop policies for their workplaces, survivors of sexual harassment find support, and public history sites think through how to interpret materials tied to problematic issues through an intersectional lens. We have also included guidelines for how to evaluate resources on these issues.

The policy team has continued to work on the proposed policy draft with feedback from the wider subcommittee. The policy team expects to share the next draft with both the Governance and IDEA Committees by the end of the year. They

will incorporate their feedback and suggestions as well as any that come from the survey data analysis, discuss with the board in early 2022, and hope to share a draft for member comment at the annual meeting.

This fall, NCPH and the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) hired Oberg Research LLC to analyze the data collected through the survey that was conducted from September 2020 to February 2021. Over 400 people responded to the survey, giving us a wealth of quantitative and qualitative information on how these issues have affected public historians around the country and in several different fields. We expect to release one or more reports on what we learned from the survey in the spring.

*-Submitted by co-chairs Kristen Baldwin Deathridge and Mary Rizzo*

### COMMITTEE FOR GOVERNMENT HISTORIANS

The Committee for Government Historians, which includes representatives from local, state, and federal government agencies, promotes public history done by governments throughout the United States and Canada. We are looking forward to another great year.

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Screenshot of post from Committee for Government Historians member Rebekah Dobrasko's Instagram takeover in August 2021.

In 2021-2022 we plan to be more active on social media, including more regular postings on our Twitter account, @NCPHGovHist, and via NCPH's social media platforms. In August, our committee co-chair, Rebekah Dobrasko, took over NCPH's Instagram account and shared stories about her public history job at the Texas Department of Transportation. Other committee members have expressed interest in taking over, so stay tuned for more government history postings in the coming year.

Another goal is to increase diversity in our membership and also to highlight government projects that explore the histories of marginalized and underrepresented communities. Part of this is sponsoring a panel at the 2022 NCPH Annual Meeting in Montreal which will explore the role public historians can and should play in ensuring that histories told by government institutions are accurate and inclusive. The panel will discuss the roles government historians can and should serve in addressing long-standing social inequities in local, state, and national communities.

In addition, our committee will be hosting an in-person workshop at the meeting entitled, "Writing for the Public: Taking out the Jargon," which will help attendees turn their work into blogs, K-12 curriculum, social media, and newspaper articles. We are also planning to hold an in-person committee meeting and are currently making plans for a social event during the week. We look forward to seeing everyone again after nearly two years of virtual conferences!

The committee can be reached at: [NCPHgovhistorians@gmail.com](mailto:NCPHgovhistorians@gmail.com).

-Submitted by co-chairs Rebekah Dobrasko and Jessie Kratz

## DIGITAL MEDIA GROUP

The Digital Media Group includes the *History@Work* editorial team, NCPH volunteer social media managers, and a subcommittee overseeing the new NCPH Digital Projects Directory. Since its launch in March 2021, the directory has grown to include more than 150 projects which social media managers have endeavored to feature on Facebook and Twitter. *History@Work*, under the excellent leadership of Digital Media Editor Nicole Belolan, has successfully expanded its editorial team to include fifteen affiliate editors in addition to its lead editorial team of five. The blog continues to be a trusted source for new and diverse perspectives in the field. In the coming year, we are looking forward to reviewing our progress as we reach the end of the current Long Range Plan cycle.

-Submitted by chair Adina Langer

## MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

The Membership Committee is refining its work plan for 2021-2022. Committee members will be reaching out to lapsed NCPH members with a personalized email, asking them to consider renewing their memberships. Preparations for the 2022 NCPH Annual Meeting are underway. The popular "NCPH Pros" session will be converted into a pre-conference session so that first time-attendees to the conference can get the most out of the session. Members are also planning a pre-conference Twitter chat.

-Submitted by co-chairs Kristen Ahlberg and Emily Keyes

## NCPH ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARK SERVICE COLLABORATION

This was the first year of operation for our committee, appointed to advise NCPH's work coordinating historical and cultural resources projects undertaken under its new five-year cooperative agreement with the National Park Service (NPS). Our role includes working with NPS partners to refine scopes of work and RFPs for projects, and assisting NCPH staff and NPS partners with vetting and selecting consultants to be hired to do the projects. In this vetting, the committee has developed a rubric that helps us pay attention to researchers' relevant training and experience, their proposed approach to the project, and their structural position (full-service consulting firm, sole proprietor, university-based scholar). We are concerned with fair compensation for all historians hired under this agreement, and we aim to make NCPH a pathway by which a more diverse array of

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## THANK YOU TO NCPH'S SUSTAINING-LEVEL MEMBERS! SUSTAINING MEMBERS MAKE THE WORK OF NCPH POSSIBLE.

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	Kathleen Franz Washington, DC	Trevor Jones Lincoln, NE		Kristine Navarro-McElhane Santa Fe, NM	Rebecca Shrum Indianapolis, IN	



degree have its own selection? Would the inclusion of museum studies as a larger feature in the *Guide* be betraying its roots in public history? I made note of these questions in the overview document, so hopefully it will allow the members of our committees to provide us with their educated feedback in determining what change works best.

Another opportunity for change was in the layouts of the entries. At some point in the past, a change was made in how schools with multiple programs were displayed, so two different systems are in place at once. For a better product, I believe each entry should appear the same way. To help select which layout to use for all such entries, I gave examples of each format on the proposal document, so that those giving feedback were able to see the options within the *Guide* itself and provide clearer responses.

After writing up the document, I added specific questions about each of my proposed changes. The committee members' responses should provide multiple perspectives on those ideas, allowing me to draw conclusions on which changes are the most important to leaders in the public history field. Of course, all our decisions come with some asterisks. If a proposed change would take a complete overhaul of the *Guide*, it might not be worth the trouble. This project was never about creating a whole new database. As it stands today, the *Guide* serves its purpose well in providing a helping hand to anyone looking to study public history, as well as offering programs across the world a chance to advertise themselves. My purpose is to find any problems or loopholes that have slowly grown since the *Guide's* inception and past updates to become virtual and then also searchable, while also determining where I think an update is needed.

At the end of the day, I am looking to help potential students to have as easy an experience as possible, and to aid faculty and program directors in advocating for the necessary resources to run competitive and ethical programs. I have learned a lot about what is important to both sides of the process. I am grateful that my work will help students for years to come, and I hope these changes help programs improve and advocate for needed resources from their departments and institutions.

We currently have our proposal documents out for comment from the committees of NCPH. As we await their advice, if you would like to contribute your own thoughts to the changes I've proposed, or wish to see more details we are considering, feel free to reach out to me at [noahnobb@iu.edu](mailto:noahnobb@iu.edu). I would welcome any advice you have!

*-Noah Nobbe is an intern at NCPH and a first-year public history graduate student at IUPUI.*

## NCPH COMMITTEE UPDATES // CONT'D. FROM PAGE 6

historians can be brought into National Park Service historical work.

The committee has advised on two projects this year: (1) An administrative history of the NPS' former Southwest National Monuments Group; and (2) A set of contextual essays related to a federal initiative (American World War II Heritage Cities program) that will identify and mark cities with significant histories related to the World War II home front experience. Our work on both projects resulted in successful identification of historians for each. As the committee's role is only advisory, the NCPH staff manages the projects once researchers are identified and hired.

*-Submitted by chair Anne Mitchell Whisnant*

### NEW PROFESSIONAL AND STUDENT COMMITTEE

The New Professional and Student Committee is gearing up for the year ahead by building on our momentum from the 2021 NCPH Annual Meeting and new initiatives spearheaded by last year's committee membership. Committee members met on November 1 to break into three working groups to tackle three broad areas within our committee's charges: programming, communications, and member resources. The programming working group will begin devising ways to plan for both virtual and in-person content around the annual meeting, as well as build from the committee's newly inaugurated "Public History Hangouts" series which brought new professionals and students together in summer 2021 for casual networking opportunities. The committee's communications working group will begin preparing content for our committee's social media accounts, as well as connect new professionals and students with prospective folks interested in pursuing advanced degrees or careers in

public history. Finally, the member resources group is working to update and revise the committee's *Public History Navigator* by transforming the *Navigator* into a more easily updated and managed digital resource. As our committee continues to meet throughout the year, we look forward to gathering at the annual meeting in Montreal!

*-Submitted by co-chairs Kirbie Sondreal and Brian Whetstone*

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The Professional Development (ProfDev) Committee formed four subcommittees, listed below with updates on their activities:

- Public History Book Club (Lead: Vanessa Camacho). The Public History Book Club held three well-attended reading group sessions in summer 2021; we plan to continue the Book Club in summer 2022, because there seems to be a real demand for it.
- Public History Speakeasies (Leads: Chris Cantwell and Madeleine Rosenberg). This sub-committee investigated interest in regional, virtual meetings for NCPH and found there isn't really any. Instead, in consultation with Meghan Hillman, the committee recommends establishing a system that can facilitate NCPH members starting their own virtual meetings among affinity groups. NCPH already has the resources to do this. What is needed, Meghan suggested, was the devising of a guide instructing members on 1) how they could start up their own book group, hang out, speakeasy, etc. with NCPH, and 2) best practice on running a virtual event like this. The benefits of this are several. It harnesses the power of the crowd, gets more people involved



We're looking forward to offering in person events like the ever-popular Speed Networking session at the conference when we head to Montreal next spring. Photo courtesy Melody Hunter-Pillion from the 2019 conference in Hartford, CT.

in NCPH, and does not burden people with running meetings they don't want to attend.

- Mid-Career Conference Sessions/Events (Lead: Eric Hung). This sub-committee has not yet met; it will do so soon in preparation for the NCPH conference and may be folded into a new, single subcommittee on conference/virtual events.
- Conference Speed Networking (Lead: Sarah Soleim). This sub-committee has not yet met; it will do so soon in preparation for the NCPH conference and may be folded into a new, single subcommittee on conference/virtual events.

### Next steps

We plan to convene the ProfDev Committee in November to begin planning for the NCPH conference, with an eye to creating more events for mid-career professionals and to considering alternatives to Speed Networking. As co-chairs, we will also meet with the co-chairs of the Membership and New Professional and Student Committees to discuss how our committees might collaborate on virtual professional development events.

*-Submitted by co-chairs Patrice Green and Tracy Neumann*

# PUBLIC HISTORY NEWS

## National Council on Public History

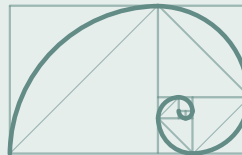
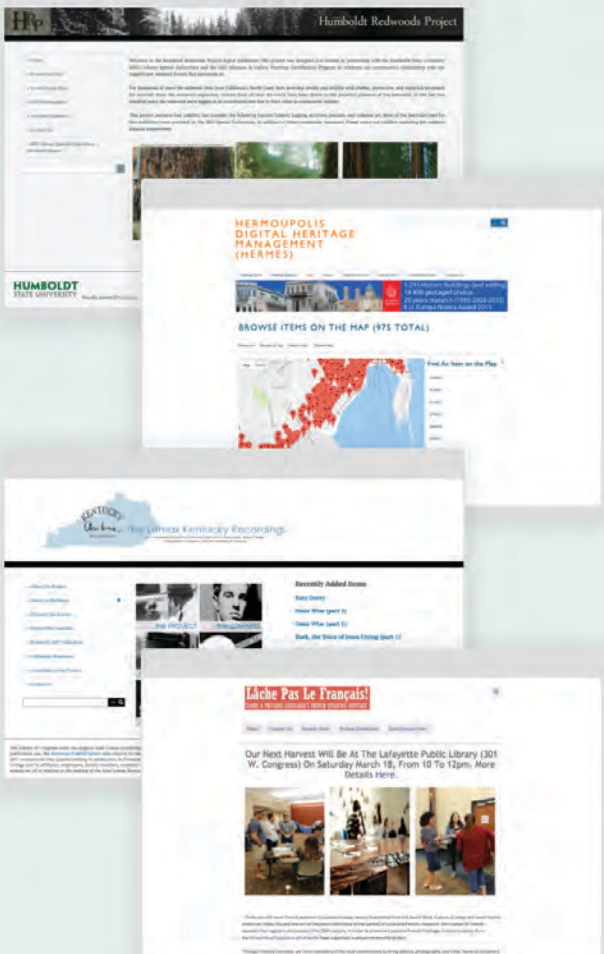
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