

Call for Proposals

The Public Historian

Special Issue: Women and Public History: The Professional, the Political, and the Historical

Guest Editors:

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Overview

Women are now the majority of public historians. Their position in the field has helped bring women into public history scholarship, showcasing the historical contributions of women, shepherding the creation of women's history archives and museums, and steering recovery work to correct women's absence from the spaces and places of history. However, overlapping professional, political, and historical concerns remain.

In the history of *The Public Historian*, this will be the first special issue to center on women's public history and women in public history, grappling with this precarious yet expanding presence at the local, national, and global level. We aim to refocus attention on women's public history as a nucleus of innovation at the forefront of intersectional, community-engaged thinking in both physical and digital spaces. We will also examine the role of women and non-binary practitioners as they wrestle with labor and funding concerns exacerbated by the current political climate.

This special issue builds on a 2023 NCPH state of the field roundtable that brought together fresh voices and veteran practitioners. These intergenerational panelists reflected on their own experiences and professional trajectories while forecasting new directions and challenges in bringing greater visibility to women in public history.

This first conversation, and continuing dialogues at various NCPH gatherings, have organically engaged a wide cross section of practitioners. These attendees exhibited diversity across age, identity, location, and areas of employment and expertise—including historical societies, independent consultants, state and local museums, archives and libraries, universities, and federal agencies. As we bring this conversation to the pages of *The Public Historian*, we hope to offer an inclusive portrait of the people who are doing this important work, its barriers and opportunities, and its foundation and future.

Structure and Themes

We envision seeking articles in three thematic areas: the professional, the political, and the historical. Submissions can address any time period, location, or type of public history work. Articles could showcase a past project(s) or current project(s), offer reports from the field, or imagine new modes of practice, concepts, or genealogies. Published articles will be between 6,000 to 7,000 words excluding notes.

The Professional

Women work in a diverse array of public history spaces. These environments have the capacity to foster a flexible and dynamic life for historians, but can also reflect the increased constraints placed on practitioners. Submissions related to this theme could provide an in-depth look into a specific workplace or comment on wider employment trends in the field.

Articles could address questions including:

- How has the workplace changed for women and non-binary people, and how it might be further transformed?
- How might we uniquely speak to how gender operates in the field of public history?
- How can we be at the forefront of our field in addressing inequality and exclusion?
- How can we strive for greater stability and sustainability in our work? What strategies have worked to gain funding or institutional support?

The Political

Some women's public historians strive to create a usable past through the discovery and preservation of texts and voices often silenced. Others focus on bringing greater visibility to gender in the public landscape locally, nationally, and globally. Still others are bridge builders in their communities working as allies with groups who seek to preserve their own history. Submissions related to this theme could outline a particular advocacy campaign or consider if women's public historians share a definable political agenda.

Articles could address questions including:

- Should women's public history have a shared politics or be political?
- In what ways can and should we guide contemporary public conversation about issues relating to women, gender, and sexuality?
- Is a more nuanced genealogy of this field's development needed and what might it look like?

The Historical

Digital humanities projects, pop-up museums, community archives, crowdsourced walking tours, and home-produced podcasts all offer expanded opportunities for historical preservation and storytelling. These innovations necessarily disrupt our hold on expertise, blurring the distinction between public historians and the public we serve. In this flexible environment, we continue to bring nuance and grounding to women's history as it is shaped. Submissions concerning this theme might include a review of new tools and methods, case studies of a historical or ongoing public history project, or calls for new growth areas in the field.

Articles could address questions including:

- In what ways can we both harness and complicate public interest in celebrating "great women" and "big moments" from historical firsts to women's history month?
- How are we changing the way we think about museums, historical preservation, archive-building, and community-engaged projects in this highly connected, yet stratified environment?
- How might public history projects reflect understanding of accessibility, inclusivity, and gender fluidity? What does this work look like and how is it supported?

Submission Guidelines and Timeline

Proposals, which should be no longer than 750 words, should be submitted to the editor of the *The Public Historian* Sarah Case at shcase@ucsb.edu. These should address: 1) the proposed contribution; 2) the research or project upon which it is grounded and 3) how the contribution connects to the special issue themes.

For more details on publication requirements, please consult *The Public Historian's* guidelines. The deadline for submission of proposals is **January 1, 2027**. Selected authors will be notified by February 1, 2027.

Initial draft submissions will be due to the editors by no later than **November 1, 2027**. Publication of the special issue of *The Public Historian* is scheduled for early 2029.

For questions about the special issue, contact special issue editors: Caitlyn Jones at caitlynmjones01@gmail.com or Leandra Zarnow at lrzarnow@central.uh.edu.