

## **Case Study: NCPH Working Group - Teaching Public History Ottawa, 17-20 April 2013**

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### **Initial statement:**

I am interested in the status of Public History teaching as part of the traditional academic emphasis of university history programs. In the past decade, several Australian universities have experienced a contraction in the range and comprehensiveness of their Public History teaching, largely as a result of staffing pressures and limited student demand. A number of substantial programs established in the 1980 and 1990s have been withdrawn, reduced in size or collapsed into other teaching programs. As the member of a broad-based history discipline grouping at a major research-intensive university, when faced with these pressures I decided to reduce UQ's public history teaching to an Honours (4<sup>th</sup> year) unit and a final year work placement option (3<sup>rd</sup> year Bachelor of Arts). This may appear a poor substitute for a wide and comprehensive program of undergraduate, Honours-level and post-graduate training in public history (as existed formerly), but I question whether such a narrow and sectional emphasis is itself a worthy ideal. Work-placements (and techniques to maximise their effectiveness) as part of undergraduate history studies is the particular theme I would like to address in the working group.

### **Introduction to case study:**

My case study reflects on the challenges we face teaching public history in a "rationalised" (ie reduced and streamlined) curriculum environment. While these circumstances certainly apply to the Australian setting, they may also be pertinent to colleagues internationally. In the discussion I aim to do a number of things: 1) introduce the case study by explaining the public history program at UQ, in particular how its curriculum has been significantly re-directed, 2) explain how the internship model worked in the older curriculum (2003-2007), and 3) explain how it works in the new curriculum (2009-12). I will consider the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, and draw out some experiences and insights that might inform effective internships and work placements.

### **PH teaching at UQ, old and new:**

I was appointed in 2002 to run a research and consultancy centre, the UQ Centre for Applied History and Heritage Studies, and to teach single-handedly a large suite of courses in public and community history at the undergraduate, 4<sup>th</sup> year Honours and postgraduate levels. The suite of courses established by my predecessor embraced local and community history, architectural history, cultural heritage management, museums and public interpretation, environmental history, and theory and methodology in public history. It attracted modest enrolments, but nevertheless was subsequently expanded as part of UQ's strategic commitment to vocational graduate coursework. In 2004 I designed an enhanced postgraduate coursework (PGCW) program in local and applied history that was offered as a

Graduate Diploma between 2005 and 2007. Enrolments for this program were modest, totalling about a dozen students in that three-year timeframe.

A review of UQ's Bachelor of Arts (BA) program in 2005-06 saw a major re-alignment of course offerings and the History curriculum in general. Along with other majors, the History program was considered by the review to be too broad and unfocused, and History staff were considered to be "over-teaching." A gateway-elective-capstone structure was established for each BA major, including History, to establish a clearer structure for students over the three years of their degree. Elective courses with unsustainable enrolments were discontinued, as was the practice of "double-coding" courses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Consequently it was no longer possible to sustain the range of PH courses previously offered in either the Graduate Diploma in Local and Applied History or as part of undergraduate studies in History.

With these changes a shift occurred in our PH teaching: rather than appearing as a fully-fledged "stream" in the History program, public history now featured as a placement option and methodology course in students' third year (their "capstone").

#### **Internships under the old model (2003-07):**

To my knowledge there were no formal work-place placements undertaken by my predecessor. In 2003 I introduced the new course HIST3202 Applied History Internship, a course with enrolments capped at two students only. Initially students were employed in cataloguing, administration and editorial duties in the Centre, but from Semester 2 2003 external placements were offered in the second half of each semester. The first of these were with the Brisbane City Council Heritage Unit, where the students undertook on-site and archival research for sites nominated to the local heritage register supervised by BCC staff (later internships occurred at museums and libraries as well as cultural heritage offices and consultancies).

This approach continued until the major reform of the UQ history curriculum in 2006-7. In essence it was based on 1) capped numbers; 2) close scrutiny of the student's initial work (six weeks) and final assessment (Week 13) by myself as the responsible staff member, and 3) workplace supervision (six weeks) by others. The strengths and weaknesses of this model will be explored in the Working Group seminar.

#### **Internships in the new model (2009-12):**

The new "capstone" structure for the History major commenced in Semester 1, 2009. This required all graduating History students in their third year to complete one compulsory final year course, plus either one or two others (depending on whether they were doing the single or extended major). In 2009-11, I taught a broad-based research methods course, while colleagues taught the 'Historical Project' course. Last year (2012) we merged those two in order to teach method and practice in a single course (WRIT3613: Making History). My role in that course was concentrated on managing and supervising 24 students in work-based placements at Queensland's major state library and museum.

In contrast to the earlier internships, I was able to closely supervise the work placements and student projects in WRIT3613 at every stage. The placement occurred over the whole semester, during which students worked either individually or in small groups on specific research projects set for them by the host institution. The strengths and weaknesses of this model will be explored in the Working Group seminar.

**Overall Considerations:**

In the Working Group seminar discussion, I plan to consider some future directions for the internship component, but also for public history teaching in general, namely:

- Clarifying the place of PH, and PH content, within broad-based History pedagogy;
- Re-thinking community/professional exposure and engagement for PH students; and
- Establishing meaningful cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral collaborations for teaching and learning in PH.

**Participant:**

Dr Geoff Ginn is a Senior Lecturer and History Discipline Convenor in the School of History, Philosophy, Religion & Classics at the University of Queensland. Formerly Director of the UQ Centre for Applied History & Heritage Studies (a school-based centre self-funding through consultancy work in public history), he is presently Deputy Director of the UQ Centre for the Government of Queensland. A member of the Board of the Queensland Museum, Geoff teaches British history, urban history, public history and the history of heritage practice. His book *Archangels & Archaeology: JSM Ward's Kingdom of the Wise* (Sussex Academic Press) appeared in 2012.

<http://www.uq.edu.au/hprc/dr-geoff-ginn>

## **NCPH Annual Conference 2013: Teaching Public History Working Group**

### **Public History at the Free University Berlin**

Presenter: Hanno Hochmuth <[hanno.hochmuth@fu-berlin.de](mailto:hanno.hochmuth@fu-berlin.de)>

History outside schools and universities and within the public sphere is not a new phenomenon, yet it took universities a long time to include forms of public history within the German academic system. History departments at German universities had trained students to become a teacher or a professor. However, most students did not end up working in schools and universities. They entered the field of public history. Due to the Bologna process, that introduced new B.A. and M.A. programs all over Europe, German universities had to face a fundamental modification of the structure of academic studies. In this period of change, new possibilities arose to include public history in academic education.

In 2006, Paul Nolte, Professor of Contemporary History at the Free University Berlin (FU), and Martin Sabrow, Director of the Center for Contemporary History in Potsdam (ZZF), started to discuss the chances of a new master's program at the Free University, dedicated to history *in* the public and history *for* the public. They implemented a new program that should account for the growing interest in media representations of history and the increasing interest in museums, memorial sites and other spaces of historical commemoration and education. It should reflect on the aesthetic, political and commercial dimensions of history and allow a deeper insight in practice fields of history. Students should be able to gain knowledge about the workings of historical culture but also on historical learning. Thus, an emphasis on history didactics was very important. Furthermore, the students should strengthen soft skills such as presentation techniques, and gain knowledge in planning and project management. Finally, the master's program should stimulate the teamwork ability of the students.

The program's focus on the history of the 20th century meets current public interests, especially in Berlin, a city that has been shaped so much by the last century. However, the focus on modern history also results from the exceptional cooperation between the Free University Berlin and the Center for Contemporary History, which is a major independent research institute on German and European contemporary history. After almost three years of intensive planning, in the winter semester 2008/09 the Public History Master's program at the Free University Berlin was launched. It was the first Public History program in Germany.

In order to apply for the Public History Master's program we require a Bachelor's degree in history or a related field. There is no fee charged. The program starts each winter semester. After four semesters the students gain a Master of Arts (M.A.) in Public History. They have to complete 120 credits and seven modules. In the last year, we received 110 applications, but we can only accept twenty students per year, which is the optimal class size for the various teaching methods, field trips and so on. Hence, an excellent B.A. is required to study in our program. Most of our students come from Germany, but there are also students from Spain, Switzerland, Poland, Ukraine, Australia and the U.S. The language of instruction is mostly German. Fifty percent of the program is concerned with more theoretical problems and questions. In the other fifty percent the students approach areas of practice. The following case study linked the theoretical and practical aspects of our Public History program.

### **Case Study: The Student Project "Kudamm'31"**

"Embodying History" was the title of a workshop that inspired twelve students of the Public History Master's program and their instructors Christine Bartlitz (Center for Contemporary History Potsdam) and Sebastian Brünger (Rimini Protokoll) to reconstruct an historical event, that has up to now seldom been addressed in public: The so-called Kudamm-Pogrom of 1931, two years before the Nazis seized power. It was on September 12, 1931, the Jewish New Year's Eve, when hundreds of Nazi SA-men gathered on Berlin's most famous boulevard Kurfürstendamm (called "Kudamm"). The mostly young men shouted anti-Semitic slogans and attacked passers-by whom they suspected of being Jewish, beating, thrashing, and clubbing them. The Kudamm-Pogrom already marked the decline of Weimar Republic and a "prelude" of the Pogrom Night in 1938.

The students, who were in their third semester, started their research in several archives and searched for newspapers and contemporary witnesses. After the material had been collected and the historical context had been outlined, the group started to develop their concept. Among the many ways to present history to a wider public the students agreed on an audio project. Files and newspaper articles, that reconstructed the historical event, were selected to be read and recorded on audio files. Interview partners – as contemporary witnesses or as experts – contextualized the material sources. In addition, various original sound recordings were collected from German broadcasting archives. Then, the group developed a script for the

public presentation of the topic. Audio clips with a length of about three to ten minutes were conceptualized. Specifically designed texts were then recorded by professional narrators, before the single sequences from narrative, interview and background noise were edited.

All sound documents were put on a digital city map of Berlin and can be downloaded as a free *radio aporee* App for the audio walk. GPS-technology in smartphones allows to locate the visitor's mobile phone so that the sound documents start playing just when the visitor is actually walking around the spots marked on the city map. An additional brochure with a city map provides the titles and the locations of the audio texts. Visitors can move freely around Kurfürstendamm without having to follow a prescribed route or sequence. Unlike pre-composed audio guides, the visitors can decide how they want to arrange their audio tour, when they want to change from one audio clip to another, and what to skip.

Another part of the students' project was its comprehensive logistical framework. When preparing the presentation, the students used methods of cultural management and public relations that they had learned in the Public History Master's program. They designed the materials for advertising and publicity as well as the website. They wrote press releases, contacted sponsors and founded their own private partnership. The project was presented to the public on March 14, 2012 in the Literaturhaus Berlin, close to the historical sites of Kurfürstendamm. On the following three Saturdays visitors could try the audio walk on Kudamm. In addition, the contents remain accessible on the website [www.kudamm31.com](http://www.kudamm31.com).

The project has received an positive feedback overall. Because the archive material and interviews are vivid and tangible, visitors responded that their impressions were very intense. Most of them had never heard of the 1931 Pogrom on Kudamm before and were interested to learn something about it. Further usages of the project are planned. The German Historical Museum wants to make it available for a larger audience in 2013. The Jewish Community of Berlin has contacted the Public History Program in order to talk about a possible cooperation. Hence, the project turned out to be a great experience for the students and a big success for our Public History Master's program.

**Melissa Bingmann, Director of Public History, West Virginia University**

**Case Statement proposal for NCPH working group “Teaching Public History”**

**Broad Issues:**

I propose to explore the value and challenges of an interdisciplinary approach to community projects as an important means of conveying what it is that historians do as compared to museum professionals, historic preservationists, landscape architects, graphic designers, and other degree specialists within a university. Too often, we discount the value of historical work by advocating that public historians must be historians first but also specialists in multiple disciplines. In preparing historians for work in the public sector, I am looking to strike a balance between practical skills and an understanding of multiple disciplines in order to be effective practitioners of history.

**Case Studies:**

The public history program at WVU was recently revived in 2009 and there is one full-time faculty member (me) and a full-time non-tenure-line program coordinator for an interdisciplinary certificate program in Cultural Resource Management (CRM). We have a traditional MA program and recently added a PhD field. One of the challenges is meeting the needs of MA students, certificate students who may not have any background in history, and PhD students who often want the option to teach and working in the public sector. One of my strategies has been to focus on researching historical narratives, rather than how to design an exhibition, for example. This is how I was trained and believe in this approach. In order for students to develop a portfolio of work, I have created projects that teach them how to work with other specialists who they will most likely collaborate with if they choose employment in the public sector. The CRM classes often attract student outside of history, have been more hands-on and focused on historic preservation, for example. One way of expanding our faculty and the breadth of experience for students is by partnering with other schools and departments.

I am currently involved in two community projects with faculty from Graphic Design and Landscape Architecture that employ the approach that historians do research and learn to present it in a format that can be used by exhibition designers and landscape architects. At the Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum (TALA), graduate students in history bring their historical skills for the purposes of creating a storyline and are working with graphic design students who use visual communications skills to design and produce the exhibition. There are many complicated layers to this project and the graphic design faculty member I am working with has greatly assisted in community engagement. The TALA contacted the history department to conduct oral history interviews, however, when visiting the site to learn more about their goals and future plans, I learned that there was some opposition to the site from the community. A private family bought the building at auction and chose not to run it as a non-profit. They do make a profit, but it all goes into preserving the site. Most of the revenue comes from ghost tours, an October haunted

house, mud bogs, and other special events. I believed that we could separate our project, which would be more scholarly, from the events. In addition to creating a far superior exhibition, the graphic designer has more experience with community engagement that has greatly benefited the project.

Arthurdale Heritage Inc, a New Deal homestead community, needed a trail and outdoor markers. Landscape architecture students designed the trail based on the geography and visitor needs, but worked with a graduate student in history to determine the best points of view to place markers to interpret the landscape. In both cases, faculty from these disciplines better understand what historians can bring to these projects, whereas in the past, the historical research and interpretation was an afterthought. Public history students learn to adapt research into a product that can be used by professionals and better understand the needs of and skills of graphic designers and landscape architects.

### **Making History the Core rather than the Fringe:**

In both cases, the Landscape Architect and Graphic Designer have experience with similar projects, but have not worked with historians. I get the sense that they both have the perception that historical scholarship and interpretation based on research is an extra benefit, but the work of historians is not essential to the outcome. After all, they have done these projects in the past without working with historians. I think both have responded positively to the improved quality of the historical content, however, I am concerned that the time constraint may dissuade them from such a collaboration in the future. With the landscape architect in particular, there is the perception that the historical research can be added to the landscape design, rather than drive the design. In a previous project working with a mine disaster site, he and a colleague designed a trail to get from a memorial to the actual mine explosion site and then asked us to develop the content for plaques. Luckily, the research had already been completed for a booklet and could be easily translated, but it was difficult to relay the content to what visitors would view, because the design was already in place. One of my challenges working with the TALA exhibition have included a misperception about conducting oral history interviews. In her mind, interviews are for community engagement and for interesting quotes. She has never conducted oral history interviews with the intention of constructing a source of history to be donated to an archives, and has never gone through the IRB process. As a historian, it is difficult to accept this approach. The other challenges have been convincing her that it is worth the time to look for a photograph of a miner from TALA, rather than just use an available photo of a West Virginia miner, for example. I am also learning that there is a difference in being viewed as a researcher and as a historian.

### **Working Across Different Program Requirements:**

The constraints of the semester and program requirements have also been a challenge. We recently implemented a practicum in order to give students the time to complete an actual public



history project. Both the graphic designer and landscape architect face this challenge as well, and we have all been relying on students willing to sign up for independent study. This creates additional work for faculty, as we are essentially doing this work outside of our teaching loads. In all three projects, because they are on-going, there has been a lot of student turnover. Students are able to build on the work of previous classes, however, there is a significant amount of time for each new student to get up to speed on the progress of the project and the historical background. Because these projects are client-driven, it is rare that students come with expertise in the historical content.

**Benefits:**

There is significant benefit to students working with clients and experts outside of history because this experience most replicates the professional challenges they will face working as historians in the public sector. I believe there is also value in conveying what it is that historians do to future graphic designers and landscape architects, but am cognizant that they can easily be turned off by working with historians who may seem particular and too scholarly at times.

## “Bridging ‘History’ and ‘Memory’: A Dutch Case Study”

Paul Knevel

University of Amsterdam, Department of History

In September 2008 the History Department of the University of Amsterdam started a new Master’s program in Public History, the first one in the Netherlands. Thanks to a financial contribution by ANNO, a public history organization popularizing Dutch history, we were able to develop new courses for this program. From the beginning we presented Public History as an important branch of history-making, firmly integrated in the History Department, and clearly different from already existing heritage and media studies. In developing the new curriculum we aimed for a fruitful combination of theory and practice, resulting in the incorporation of various real public history projects (like making short documentary films on the history of Amsterdam, developing website exhibits and doing oral history projects) in the compulsory core course of the program. The curriculum consists of a compulsory core course, a course on a specific Public History theme (for instance History and Actuality, Dealing with History in South Africa, and Digital History), an elective (chosen from the courses offered by the History Department and the other Departments of the Faculty of Humanities), a three-month internship and a Master’s thesis (18 ECTP). Every year we select 16 students from about 25 to 30 applicants.

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A public historian should in the first place be a damn good historian. So when Robert Kelley in 1978 had to describe this new kid on the block, he stressed the importance of the historical method: ‘In its simplest meaning’, Public History refers to the employment of historians and the historical method outside of academia’.<sup>1</sup> Public historians, in other words, are in the first place professional historians, maybe working in peculiar circumstances, but with a clear opinion about their own professionalism. Every study-year, most of the new Amsterdam master’s students in Public History define themselves in their first mission statement as historians translating scholarly research to a larger public.

But then they start to find out about ‘outside academia’ and to discover that in Public History far more is at stake than simply using the historical method and its corresponding code of ethics in public. Moreover, ‘outside academia’, even the historical method itself can be a main problem. More than once, (public) historians have been criticized for asking the wrong questions or giving false answers. Sometimes, as in the history wars in the United States, these conflicts reveal a disjunction between a scholarly approach to history and the public’s more personal, or even semimythic view of the past;<sup>2</sup> whereas at other times, as in the debates following the broadcasting of the recent Dutch tv-series ‘The Slavery’ (2011), ‘outsiders’ (i.c. postcolonial scholars and members of the Afro-Dutch

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Kelley, ‘Public History: Its Origins, Nature, and Prospects’, *The Public Historian* 1,1 (1978) 16.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Boyer, ‘Whose History is it Anyway? Memory, Politics, and Historical Scholarship’, in: Edward T. Linenthal, Tom Engelhardt, eds., *History Wars. The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past* (Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt and Company: New York, 1996) 115-139.

community) question the 'objective', based on sources and facts, historical research of the (public) historians involved, in this peculiar example as a traditional 'white' perspective.<sup>3</sup> Who indeed owns history?

And even more problematic: what is history? As a response to the traumatic twentieth century history, that infamous Age of Extremes, the clear division between 'history' and 'memory' has become blurred, and 'history' has lost a lot of its natural authority in the process.<sup>4</sup> Mastering the historical method is, in other words, no longer enough for public historians. New lessons have to be learned, and every public historian, at least, needs to acquaint him/herself with the broader and multi-layered historical culture he/she is functioning in.

There is, happily, no lack of relevant study material on these topics. But only by involving students in practical projects concerning contested topics, they will learn to understand the historical culture they will become part of and start to define their role as public historians and the code of ethics needed. Let me give an example.

Two years ago I designed with the help of Sara Polak and Sara Tilstra a short oral history project on the Dutch legacies of slavery as part of a master's course on Public History. The starting point was simple: the sixteen students involved were divided into eight pairs and every pair had to interview two different people about their relationship to (the legacies of) slavery. On the basis of the transcripts of the interviews, the students had to write a portrait of every interviewee in which his/her opinions were clearly presented. The preparation was short and simple: an introduction in interviewing techniques and some reading in the historiography of Dutch slavery, that was all.

The project was a success; it even resulted in a publication.<sup>5</sup> But more importantly, the project proved to be an instructive introduction into historical culture. By interviewing various persons and writing the portraits, the students discovered automatically a wide range of 'voices': they spoke with active Afro-Dutch for whom slavery and its legacies were an essential part of a politics of identity, but also with other 'Caribbean' Dutch who on the contrary underlined the necessity to forget ('no future without forgetting') and with white Dutch people who at a later stage in their lives were, through work or friendship, confronted with a topic they had always considered something of a long gone past. 'Memory', the students found out, was not as uniform and clear as some scholars seem to suggest.

Moreover, probably for the first time in their lives, the students (all but one white) talked extensively with outspoken members of the vivid postcolonial memory-community that has manifested since the 1990s in the Netherlands. For most, it turned out to be a confrontational experience: 'I (...) found myself pushed into a pigeon-hole, whereas I always try to think without pigeon-holes'. Or more outspoken: '[I found] his line of reasoning and pattern of thought incomprehensible. Consequentially I felt myself discriminated against as a "white" Dutchman...'

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<sup>3</sup> Guno Jones, 'De Slavernij is onze geschiedenis (niet). Over de discursieve strijd om de betekenis van de NTR-televisieserie *De Slavernij*', *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 127,4 (2012) 57-81.

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit. Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (Verlag C.H.Beck: München, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Paul Knevel, Sara Polak, Sara Tilstra, eds., *Meerstemmig Verleden. Persoonlijke verhalen over het Nederlandse slavernijverleden* (KIT Publishers: Amsterdam, 2011).

As a reaction, one or two of the students stuck to the all too familiar role as historian and stressed the necessity for objective facts as a counterforce to 'black emotionalism'. But most of the students involved did try to overcome the false dichotomy between 'white history' and 'black memory' and were willing to reflect on their own attitudes and the limits of the dominant historical approaches to slavery. They started to realize that knowledge and representations are 'situational', always connected to specific groups, positions and power relations. 'I have learned a lot', one of the students reflected later, 'not only about emotions you did not realize before, but also about the complexities and sensitivities of history'.

Reflections like these came close to the hidden ambition of the project: to bridge the familiar history of slavery (as found in the historiography) with memories and perspectives most of the students (and white Dutch) are unaware of, simply because they are marginal in academia and society. 'Perhaps history and memory in the end may act usefully upon each other', Bernard Bailyn wrote more than ten years ago. 'The one may usefully constrain and yet vivify the other. The passionate, timeless memory of the slave trade that tears at our conscience and shocks our sense of decency may be shaped, focused, and informed by the critical history we write, while the history we so carefully compose may be kept alive, made vivid and constantly relevant and urgent by the living memory we have of it. We cannot afford to lose or diminish either if we are to understand who we are and how we got to be the way we are'.<sup>6</sup>

Inspired by these words our project aimed to give various individuals and groups a voice, in order to come to a more inclusive and many-voiced history of Dutch slavery and its legacies. Of course, a lot of work has to be done, but the project at least helped the students advance in their process of becoming a public historian. These are things that literature cannot prepare you for.

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<sup>6</sup> Bernard Bailyn, 'Considering the Slave Trade: History and Memory', *The William and Mary Quarterly* third series, 58,1 (2001) 251.