

**PUBLIC HISTORY, PUBLIC HISTORIANS, AND THE
AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
Report of the Task Force on Public History
Submitted to the Council of the Association
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PART I: BACKGROUND

Since its founding in 1884, the American Historical Association has been simultaneously involved with and indifferent to history as it is practiced outside of the academy.¹ Among the association's early members were men affiliated with state and local historical societies, devoted amateurs, and gentlemen scholars. Herbert Baxter Adams, the AHA's first secretary, sought to promote collegial relations between local amateurs and professionally trained historians and advocated a close relationship between historians and the public, declaring that "local studies should always be connected in some way with the life of the community and should always be used to quicken that life to higher consciousness."² Early presidents of the Association included librarians, archivists, barristers, and politicians.

Equally important, since its founding the AHA has been actively involved in affairs beyond the pursuit of scholarly research, including the preservation of archival records and the teaching of history in the schools. The Association helped establish and remains the primary supporter of the National Coalition for History (previously the National Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History), a national advocate for history; and at least since the 1980s has occasionally sought ways to recognize and support the work of historians outside the academy. Its 1993 report, *Redefining Historical Scholarship*, articulates a broad definition of scholarship that encourages college faculty to move beyond traditional research and legitimizes public history work. In recent years the Association has also taken a professional interest in controversies surrounding the public presentation of history at the Smithsonian Institution and elsewhere. Like Adams, many individual AHA members over the past 119 years have actively sought to link scholarship with broader civic concerns.

Yet early on, the emerging professoriate, for whom the pursuit of scholarship was an overriding concern, distanced itself from non-academic members of the Association. The AHA increasingly focused on the interests of professionally trained scholars practicing in an academic setting. Consequently, in 1904 the Conference of State and Local Historical Societies organized within AHA to address the interests of that constituency, whose members, though accomplished and deeply committed to history, frequently lacked

¹ We take this as the broadest definition of "public history," deliberately not complicating the definition of who is or is not a public historian or what does or does not constitute public history. Public historians are simply those who "do history" outside the academy, whatever their primary locus of employment, whatever the specific nature of their historical work. What they do, as historians, constitutes public history.

² John Higham, "Herbert Baxter Adams and the Study of Local History," *American Historical Review* 89:5 (December 1984): 1230.

advanced training in the discipline. Some thirty-six years later, the conference broke away from the AHA to establish its own independent organization, the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH). Partly in response to the job crisis, in the 1970s public history emerged as a self-conscious field focused on historical work carried on outside of an academic setting, including presenting history to public audiences. The National Council on Public History (NCPH) was established in 1980 to represent this field, joining the Society for History in the Federal Government (SHFG), founded the previous year, as a forum for the exchange of ideas and a means to advance the common interests among professional historians outside the academy. Dozens of graduate programs in public history have developed over the past quarter century. At the same time, historians whose primary professional commitment lay in museums and historical organizations became increasingly segregated from their academic colleagues. Over the long term, public and academic historians have become cut off from one another – some would argue deeply estranged – even though they frequently share a common training and commitment to professional history.³

The separation of academic from public historians is symptomatic of the deeper disjuncture of historians from public life. It is hard to imagine George W. Bush joining the Association, as did Woodrow Wilson, Theodore Roosevelt, Grover Cleveland, William McKinley, Rutherford B. Hayes, James Garfield, and John F. Kennedy.⁴ Historical study has become increasingly specialized and inward-turning, as peers form the primary audience for historians' work. Graduate study has become devoted to monographic research, with the nearly exclusive goal of obtaining an academic appointment even in the face of a chronically depressed job market. Faculty face increasing pressure to produce scholarly publications. At the same time, we are witnessing enormous popular interest in history. Academics are expressing a desire for a stronger voice in public debates, lamenting that their research fails to reach a wide audience. The AHA's signal achievement of the last several years, *The Education of Historians in the 21st Century*, addresses many of these concerns in the context of graduate training. Indeed, it begins by acknowledging that "fellows historians with advanced education in the discipline are not only employed as teachers but also work in other settings where they apply their historical knowledge to a variety of pursuits, as journalists, editors, filmmakers; in research institutes, law offices, libraries, and government agencies; and as consultants in the private sector." Nor is this simply a list of "alternate careers"; the report continues: "Such an inclusivity supports the profession's public responsibility to promote historical knowledge in American society, whether in schools, in colleges, in museums, in the media, or in the formation of public policy."⁵ The report of the Task Force on Public History is a second step in the process of reintegrating public and academic history, so that the AHA may represent all historians

³John Higham, "Herbert Baxter Adams and the Study of Local History"; Arnita Jones, "Public History Now and Then," *The Public Historian* 21:3 (Summer 1999): 21-28; Arthur S. Link, "The American Historical Association, 1884-1984: Retrospect and Prospect," *American Historical Review* 90:1 (February 1985): 1-17; David Van Tassel, "From Learned Society to Professional Organization: The American Historical Association, 1884-1900," *American Historical Review* 89 (1984): 929-956.

⁴Thanks to Miriam Hauss, who consulted the 1887 and 1907 membership lists, and Arnita Jones.

⁵Thomas Bender, Philip M. Katz, Colin Palmer, and the Committee on Graduate Education of the American Historical Association, *The Education of Historians in the 21st Century* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 3.

and better “promote historical knowledge in American society.”

Formation of the Task Force on Public History

Against this backdrop, the AHA Council established the Task Force on Public History (TFPH) in January 2001. Its immediate origins can be traced to a conversation about issues of mutual concern between representatives of the AHA and NCPH in the fall of 1999, initiated by AHA Council member Linda Shopes; Stanley Katz, then Vice President of the Research Division; and Arnita Jones, recently appointed Executive Director of the Association, all of whom shared an interest in advancing the AHA’s relationship with public history. One result of that meeting was an agreement between the two organizations to co-publish a revised edition of *Careers for Students of History*, which appeared in 2002. Another was to refer various matters of concern to public historians to the AHA’s Professional Division, which considered them carefully during the following year. The division recognized that it could not give public history the careful and sustained attention it required and recommended that Council establish a Task Force on Public History.

Upon the Council’s acceptance of the Professional Division’s recommendation, then president Wm. Roger Louis charged the task force with identifying ways the AHA can more effectively address the interests and concerns of public historians both within the Association and at large, as well as ways of deepening an understanding of and appreciation for the activities of public historians within the profession. In particular, he charged the task force to report to the Council, through its Professional Division, on the following matters:

1. The size and nature of the current membership of public historians in the Association
2. Whether degree offerings in higher education institutions – including undergraduate as well as graduate programs – adequately take into account the role public history can and does play in the nation’s cultural life and within the profession
3. What professional needs are voiced by public historians that membership in the AHA could and should address
4. The degree to which various professional standards and practices published by the AHA adequately reflect and serve the needs of public historians
5. Ways in which the AHA could cooperate on public history issues and initiatives with public history organizations, particularly the National Council on Public History and the Society for History in the Federal Government

The following individuals were appointed to the task force in May 2001 by President Louis:

- Michael Frisch, professor of history and American studies at the State University of New York at Buffalo

- Marie Tyler McGraw, an independent historian and most recently on the staff of the National Park Service (resigned in late 2001)
- Maureen Murphy Nutting, professor of history at North Seattle Community College, who as a member of the AHA Council, has served as the Task Force liaison to the Professional Division
- Linda Shopes, historian at the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, chair
- Noel Stowe, professor and chair of the History Department and senior director of the Graduate Program in Public History at Arizona State University
- Jamil Zainaldin, executive director of the Georgia Humanities Council

Victoria Hardin, Director, Office of NIH History and Stetten Museum, National Institutes of Health, joined the Task Force as cochair in January 2002 upon her election to the AHA Council.

The Work of the Task Force

Responding to its charge, the TFPH took as its primary goal the preparation of this report. Over the past two-and-a-half years, it has had two face-to-face meetings and two teleconference meetings, supplemented by regular listserv communications. While the minutes of these meetings record the range of issues task force members discussed and various actions taken, they do not convey the energy, imagination, and commitment that especially characterized the face-to-face meetings. Repeatedly, task force members have had to remind themselves that they were charged with *recommending* action to the Council, not *initiating* it.⁶

To inform its work, the TFPH surveyed all AHA members about their involvement in and concerns about public history. Almost seven hundred individuals responded to this broad survey. A more focused survey of public historians, circulated via selected listservs, helped identify their particular interests and needs. The task force received fewer than one hundred responses to this second survey. In addition, the task force conducted open forums at the AHA's 2002 and 2003 annual meetings; engaged in numerous conversations with public history colleagues from SHFG, NCPH, and AASLH, as well as unaffiliated individuals; consulted with Philip Katz, research director for the Committee on Graduate Education, who provided valuable data and input; and reviewed relevant AHA documents, particularly the *Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct*. The task force also benefited from responses to the original announcement of its formation in the September 2001 *Perspectives* and especially to President James McPherson's column, "Putting Public History in Its Proper Place," appearing in the March 2003 *Perspectives*.

⁶ Face to face meetings were on March 9, 2002 and February 1, 2003; conference call meetings on August 23, 2001 and October 15, 2002. These meetings have been reported in full in four memos to the Professional Division, dated November 29, 2001; March 27, 2002; November 1, 2002; and March 19, 2003. While the task force directed its attention primarily to the preparation of this report and related activities, it also engaged in a number of other short term activities broadly related to its charge, including organizing sessions for the 2002, 2003, and 2004 annual meetings; reviewing the draft of the CGE's report, *The Education of Historians in the 21st Century*; and recommending public historians to the Committee on Committees for various appointments.

Two key assumptions have guided our work: first, we understand public history not as a distinct subset or constituency of the historical profession, but in the broader sense of education for and engagement with the public and, as such, a legitimate dimension of the work of all professional historians. Second, we believe that the AHA and the profession need to take deliberate and active steps to value and serve public history. All of the task force's efforts at information gathering revealed public historians' sense of estrangement from, frustration with, even hostility to the organized history profession.

There is an admitted tension in these two assumptions: on the one hand we embrace the notion that "we are all public historians,"⁷ on the other, we recognize that public history defines a specific kind of historical practice and that public historians have common interests. This tension runs through this report, surfacing in recommendations that identify ways "on the one hand" of blurring the boundary between academic and public practice and "on the other" of addressing the unique needs of public historians.

Yet we would also suggest that there is an underlying coherence to our understanding of public history and public historians. A broad conception of the public dimension of the historical profession recasts the place of public historians within the Association and profession, shifting the focus from an estranged or antagonistic relationship between academic and public historians to one that is more balanced, respectful, and dialogic. As the task force envisions it, the AHA should be the place where historians with different professional relationships to the primary functions of teaching, research, and public presentation learn to work together as equals. Moreover, concerns and opportunities can flow in both directions – it is not a matter of outreach or inclusion from a secure center to a marginalized other. Just as academic history and historians can expand outward toward more sustained engagement with history outside the academy and with varied forms of historical discourse, so too can the professional research standards, methods of accountability, and modes of critical assessment refined in academic practice be valuable resources for improving historical representation and discourse, whatever the mode and venue. An expansive definition of historical practice will also allow the AHA to better address fundamental challenges facing our profession as a whole, including audience, modes of publication, popular (mis)conceptions of history, job market definition and access, and the structure of history education, particularly in the graduate programs responsible for shaping and training future generations of historians. Attention to public history – in this broadest sense – becomes not a problem to be solved, but an opportunity for the AHA, for the profession, and for all historians. The AHA has the unique ability to build bridges between historians practicing in different professional contexts. All historians share a commitment to excellence in the common project of history, and the AHA can encourage them to recognize the value of each other's work. The AHA can fully articulate public history, in both the broad and specialized senses, within the profession in a way that supplements and supports the ongoing work of more specialized

⁷ This concept, phrased as the question "should we all become public historians?" and answered affirmatively was advanced by AHA president Joyce Appleby in her column in the March 1997 issue of *Perspectives*.

public history organizations.

Finally, the task force believes that this is an especially opportune time for the AHA to direct attention and resources toward public history. Its survey of AHA members reveals a deep and passionate concern that, especially in these difficult times, historians reclaim a role in public life. Some respondents defined this as giving historical perspectives on current issues; others, playing a role in the formulation of public policy. Some members indicated a desire for greater personal involvement in public history programs and projects; others urged the AHA to advocate for the intellectual integrity of public presentations of history. Relatively few respondents (13.6 percent) believe that the advancement of scholarship should remain the central focus of the AHA, to the exclusion of public practice. On the other hand, 39 percent think public practice/practitioners need to be more highly valued and incorporated into the profession and just over 29 percent think that the profession does a poor job of serving nonacademically based historians. The survey also revealed that historians whose primary affiliation is with an academic institution are *already* considerably involved in some form of public history, with 85 percent of respondents noting involvements ranging from occasional to substantial.

AHA members also recognize there is an enormous public interest in history, even as they regret that this interest is all too frequently satisfied by work of questionable quality. Survey respondents also readily admitted that academic historians have generally abandoned writing for non-specialized audiences and expressed considerable interest in educating the public to a more complex view of the past. Finally, the survey indicated a pragmatic recognition that the dearth of academic positions will continue to lead more historians to public history; and the need, therefore, for the profession and the Association to accommodate this trend in positive ways.

Public historians surveyed by the task force identified many of the same concerns as respondents to the survey of AHA members: the lack of understanding within their institutions, within the profession, and among the public about the need for and value of good history for the general public; the challenges of dealing with popular misconceptions of the past; the desire for greater cooperation with academic colleagues; and the need for greater public support for – and especially funding of – public history institutions. Indeed, the similarity in responses to these two surveys suggests there is considerable common ground upon which all historians stand. It is the goal of this report to recommend ways the AHA can cultivate that ground.

Organization of the report

Part II of this report discusses each charge to the task force sequentially. Recommendations follow discussion of each charge, in roughly the following order:

- relatively simple changes that can be accomplished – in some cases are already underway – within existing AHA programs and activities
- more complex projects that will require additional resources and further thought, but nonetheless fall within the general range of current AHA activities

- new initiatives that will require further thought, fundraising, and additional resources

Each recommendation also identifies the appropriate body within the AHA to which it can be referred for further consideration and implementation. Part III will summarize key recommendations, outline the next steps for advancing a public history agenda within the AHA, and consider how to institutionalize public history within the Association.

As a lead in to what follows, we note here that our recommendations fall into several key areas:

- advocacy for greater attention to public history in undergraduate and graduate training; for including public history activities in the evaluation of faculty; and for hiring trained historians to do historical work
- changes in the annual meeting to more fully integrate public history/public historians
- greater attention to public history employment issues
- expansion of member services to public historians
- creation of professional development opportunities that bring academic and public historians together to mutual advantage
- enhanced advocacy for history at the state level
- development of ways to enhance public understanding of history, especially through the media
- revision of professional standards and practices to take account of public history
- enhanced relationships and collaborations with public history organizations

Throughout our deliberations, we have enjoyed the collegial support and sound counsel of the Professional Division, especially Vice President William Cronon; and Arnita Jones, Executive Director. We are particularly indebted to Debbie Ann Doyle, who has guided the work of this report from the outset with unflagging care, good sense, and hard work.

PART II: CHARGE TO THE TASK FORCE ON PUBLIC HISTORY

Charge 1: The size and nature of the current membership of public historians in the Association

Membership

Although the AHA collects a variety of demographic and professional data about its members on its membership renewal and new member forms, the data does not include detailed occupational information. Hence it is not possible to get a precise count of the number of public historians within the AHA. Nonetheless, staff were able to identify two broad categories of public historians from the membership data base:

- those who identify their “Principal Area of Employment” on the membership form as outside of the academy, most of whom can be inferred to be public historians⁸
- those who identify their “Principal Area of Employment” as a school, college, or university, but also identify a nonacademic employment category under “Position” on the membership form⁹

Robert Townsend, Assistant Director for Publications, Information Systems, and Research, prepared a “Report on Public Historians in AHA Membership as of March 31, 2003” (see **Appendix 1**). This profile provides context for subsequent sections of the report and also defines a baseline against which to compare future assessments of the representation of public historians in the Association. The following summarizes key points.

If we assume that the 1,758 AHA members (of a total of 14,048) whose “Principal Area of Employment” is outside of the academy are, in fact, employed in public history positions, **12.5 percent of AHA members are public historians**. An additional 24.7 percent are academics who also hold a nonacademic position; of these, 19 percent can clearly be identified as public historians, working primarily as researcher/consultants and independent historians. Thus, according to AHA membership data, **approximately 17 percent of the Association’s members can be reckoned as public historians**. When coupled with data from the task force’s survey of AHA members, which indicates some involvement in public history among 85 percent of academic respondents, we can reasonably assert that public history is part of the normal practice of many AHA members.

⁸ “Inferred,” because we do not know, for example, if the 310 members who identify their “Principle Area of Employment” as “Business or Industry” are employed in what can broadly be considered “history jobs,” or if they have left the field altogether.

⁹ Most of these individuals are not likely to be substantively involved in public history; fully 54 percent fall into the amorphous “other” category; 13 percent are “administrators,” including, presumably, college and university administrators; and 8.6 percent are retired.

The 12.5 percent of AHA members who are principally employed outside the academy can further be characterized as follows:

- Many of them are self-employed (32 percent); others are employed in business or industry (17.6 percent), U.S. government (12 percent), nonprofit organizations (10.5 percent), and research centers, libraries, or archives (10 percent)
- Almost half (42 percent) also list an academic position, primarily as graduate student, doctoral candidate, or adjunct. The task force's survey of AHA members amplifies membership data on this point: 27 percent of nonacademic respondents reported *substantial* involvement in research, teaching, and scholarly presentations and publication
- They are somewhat (13.6 percent) less likely than all AHA members to have a PhD and slightly (5.9 percent) more likely to have an MA as their terminal degree. They are slightly (4.4 percent) less likely than all members to be students
- Their research specialization approximates that of all AHA members in many fields. They are, however, considerably overrepresented in legal, military, and public history and the history of science and technology; and considerably underrepresented in the fields of cultural, gender, intellectual, religious, social, and women's history
- They have considerably lower incomes than all AHA members (24.7 percent reporting incomes under \$20,000 and just under 1 percent over \$70,000; as opposed to 13.8 percent and 11.3 percent respectively for the entire membership)
- Their racial and gender profiles are similar to that of the entire AHA membership

In addition, a mere 1.6 percent of AHA members are also members of the American Association for State and Local History; 1 percent are members of the National Council on Public History (which, nonetheless, is about 14 percent of NCPH's individual members); and only .07 percent belong to the Society of American Archivists (SAA).

These data suggest a few observations: the AHA's membership includes a respectable, if modest, number of historians whose primary employment is outside of the academy and in public history. A sizable minority of all AHA members are involved in public history, ranging from regular employment to occasional consultancies. Nonetheless, the AHA obviously appeals to an academic constituency. Even those whose primary employment is nonacademic also indicate an academic affiliation. It is also likely that, at least for many AHA members, public history is a default and perhaps temporary position for those who have not secured full-time academic employment, a conclusion supported by the fact that a relatively large percentage of those members counted as public historians are self-employed, independent historians, or researcher/consultants. In fact, few who join AASLH, NCPH, or SAA, indicating that they primarily identify themselves as public historians, also join the AHA.

Perhaps the most optimistic conclusion to be drawn from the data is that the AHA has a solid base of public historians – and more importantly, historians engaged in public history – among its current membership upon which future growth can build. The task force’s brief electronic survey of public historians suggests that the majority are not AHA members because they perceive the Association as primarily focused on the interests and needs of academics. Changing that perception could convince more public historians to join the AHA.

Leadership

The task force also analyzed the extent to which public historians have played a leadership role within the AHA by serving in either elected or appointed positions during the past decade (1994-2003). Here public historians are reckoned solely on their institutional affiliation, based on data compiled by staff. The task force understands that many historians with academic affiliations demonstrate commitment to public history and also that many leadership positions have little to do with public history. Nonetheless, the number of nonacademically affiliated historians in leadership positions is a useful measure of their engagement with the Association, as well as a means of assessing their visibility (or invisibility) within it. It is also of substantive and symbolic importance to many public history colleagues.

Table 1 displays the elected and appointed positions held by public historians, 1994-2003

Table 1			
Public Historians in AHA Leadership Positions			
	Newly		
	Appointed or		
Year	Elected	Total in Service	
1994	5	10	
1995	7	13	
1996	4	14	
1997	0	8	
1998	4	7	
1999	5	9	
2000	3	11	
2001	7	17	
2002	6	17	
2003	9	24	

(excluding the Program and Local Arrangements Committees, discussed separately below). (Also see **Appendix 2.**) They have held a total of 55 positions during the decade, including 10 elected and 45 appointed positions. Each year, 12 positions are filled by election. Public historians have thus been elected to fill **8.3 percent of the available elected positions** for the decade under consideration. The total number of appointments made annually varies, depending upon the cycle of a given award, the cycle of appointments, and other

considerations. In 2004, 39 positions were open for appointment; if that number is taken as fairly typical, public historians have filled **approximately 11.5 percent of available appointed positions.**¹⁰

¹⁰ In any given year, public historians have filled from seven to twenty-four positions, both elected and appointed; the average is thirteen positions annually. Looked at another way, each year during the decade zero to nine public historians have been elected or appointed to positions, the average is five (the discrepancy between the number of total positions held annually and number of positions to which individuals are elected or appointed in a given year results from the fact that the term of most positions is longer than a single year; typically it is three).

The data reveal a number of patterns:

- Public historians have consistently been represented on the Council throughout the decade, with four individuals elected in succession to an unofficial public history slot¹¹
- They have held four positions on the Research Division and one on the Professional Division
- For eight of the ten years under consideration, they have had a seat on the Committee on Women Historians
- They have been represented on six of the AHA's 13 standing and joint committees and ad hoc task forces; nine of its 26 prize and award committees; and three of its eight delegate positions
- More than one-fourth (28.8 percent) of the total appointed positions filled by public historians have been on the Herbert Feis Award Committee, where they have filled thirteen slots. The Feis Award recognizes the scholarly interests of public and independent historians and was created during previous efforts to increase the Association's service to public historians
- During 2003, a record 24 public historians held leadership positions within the Association. One fourth of these positions were appointments to either the Task Force on Public History or the Task Force on Intellectual Property

Because the annual meeting is the AHA's most visible and inclusive program, public historians' participation on the Program and Local Arrangements Committees has been

Table 2
Public Historians on the Program and Local Arrangements Committees

Year	Program Committee		Local Arrangements Committee	
	Number of Public Historians	Number on Ctte.	Number of Public Historians	Number on Ctte.
1994	1	13	1	22
1995	1	13	3	13
1996	1	13	1	16
1997	0	11	0	11
1998	1	11	4	17
1999	1	11	6	17
2000	0	12	1	16
2001	0	14	5	24
2002	1	16	2	19
2003	0	14	8	29
Totals	6	128	31	184
	4.70%		16.80%	

*a public historian was co-chair of the 1999 Program Committee

reckoned separately, as displayed on Table 2.¹² Overall, public historians have constituted 4.7 percent of the Program Committee and 16.8 percent of the Local Arrangements Committee during the decade.

Again several observations can be made: public historians have been consistently, if sparsely, represented among AHA's leadership during the past decade. If the 17 percent figure noted above can be taken as a rough gauge of the total membership of public historians in the AHA, their level of participation in leadership positions has not been on par with their overall numbers. However, it may be more useful to look at where public historians have and have not been represented. While welcome in some ways, the informal allocation of a public history slot on the Council is its own form of marginalization. Could two never serve simultaneously? Among the divisions, the Research Division has been most open to public historians; all divisions could arguably benefit from their sustained participation. For the ten years under consideration, no public historian has served on the Committee for Graduate Students, the Committee on Minority Historians, or the Committee on Committees; only one has served on the Nominating Committee. While well represented on Local Arrangements Committees, public historians have not been much represented on the Program Committee. Other than overrepresentation on the Feis Award Committee, again perhaps a form of marginalization, they have enjoyed only scattered representation on other prize and award committees, fellowship and grant committees, and as delegates.¹³ No public historian served on the Editorial Board of the *American Historical Review* in the past decade.

Recommendations:

1. Continue to track the size and nature of AHA's public historian membership and their leadership participation in the Association, in order to assess the impact of the AHA's efforts on behalf of public history and measure change over time. (staff)
2. In the context of AHA's developing marketing program, consider a targeted membership campaign, focusing on members of the National Council on Public History, the Society for History in the Federal Government, and the American Association for State and Local History, *after the Association has demonstrated an increasing commitment to public history and public historians*. Consider a joint membership arrangement with one or more of these organizations and/or consider soliciting joint advertisements for membership in these organizations' newsletters. (staff)

¹¹ Four, because the data provide a ten-year snapshot and two Council members – at the beginning and end of the decade – were reckoned mid-term.

¹² In seven of the ten years, five or fewer public historians were on the LAC. Six public historians have served on the Program Committee; zero to 12 have served on the LAC in a given year. One public historian has co-chaired each committee.

¹³ One explanation for the absence of public historian on book prize committees is the preponderance of Americanists among them – committee members must have published work in the field represented by the award and thirteen of the AHA's prizes cover fields outside the United States.

3. Expand current efforts to include public historians in AHA leadership positions, especially on those divisions and committees where they have been largely absent. In light of the Professional Division's reaffirmed mission to represent the professional interests of all historians, regularly include one or more public historians on that body. While the task force recognizes that AHA leadership must be broadly representative in a number of different categories, including geographic specialization, it also understands leadership to be more important than "representation." We therefore recommend neither a quota system nor the assignment of specific "slots" to public historians, but a more integrative approach, which recognizes that a public historian can make a positive contribution to the AHA as both a public historian and colleague. (Nominating Committee, Committee on Committees)
4. Evaluate knowledge of and commitment to public history as an important consideration in the selection of nominees for the position of AHA president, president elect, and vice presidents. (Nominating Committee)
5. For the next several years, include on the Nominating Committee and Committee on Committees one or more individuals with well developed networks among public historians who will identify public historians as candidates for available positions. In the absence of such individuals, actively seek recommendations for candidates. (Nominating Committee, Committee on Committees)
6. Regularly include public historians and/or academically employed historians with a lively interest in public history on the annual meeting Program Committee. While the Task Force recognizes that the Program Committee must represent diverse fields and interests within a limited number of positions and does not seek an annual slot or quota, it also notes that public historians also have expertise in fields other than public history. Continue the substantial representation of public historians on the Local Arrangements Committee, including, where feasible, the appointment of a public historian as LAC cochair. The presence of public historians on the PC and LAC will be instrumental in implementing recommendations we are making for the Annual Meeting (see Charge 3). (Research Division, staff)
7. Consider an occasional, informal modification of the AHA policy that requires those appointed or elected to a leadership position be an Association member, so that an individual who is not an AHA member may nonetheless be approached about service to the AHA on the condition that, if he/she wishes to accept a nomination or appointment, s/he must immediately join the Association. The task force recognizes that a commitment to the AHA as indicated by membership is an important qualification for a position within the Association. Yet it also recognizes a vicious cycle: public historians are not AHA members because they do not feel represented by the Association and the Association loses the contribution of otherwise highly qualified public historians because they are not members. (Nominating Committee, Committee on Committees).

8. Revise the employment taxonomy on the membership form to distinguish those who work outside of the academy in history related jobs from those who work outside the field of history altogether. (See **Appendix 3**.) Refine the “Position” categories to distinguish those that are located in an academic setting, those in a public history setting, and those outside the field of history. Consult with public historians to determine the most appropriate categories of public history employment. While we recognize that implementing this recommendation may involve considerable time and expense, we also suggest that expanding fields in the employment taxonomy would not seriously undercut comparison over time and would make comparisons more precise. (staff)

Charge 2: Whether degree offerings in higher education institutions – including undergraduate as well as graduate programs – adequately take into account the role public history can and does play in the nation’s cultural life and within the profession.

Since this charge was closely related to the work of the Committee on Graduate Education (CGE), the task force worked with that committee, and more recently with the Committee on the Master’s Degree (CMD), particularly with Research Director Philip M. Katz, to focus attention on the role of public history in graduate education and placement. Within the context of its definition of public history as both public engagement and career choice, the task force also considered internship programs, the placement of history majors and PhDs in public history positions, and the adequacy of information students receive about opportunities in public history. It also discussed issues of concern to faculty, including the place of public history in the tenure and reward structure of traditional academic departments and the role of public historians as adjunct and part-time faculty. These topics reflect concerns expressed repeatedly in the surveys conducted by the task force and in the survey of public history employers jointly sponsored by the CGE and TFPH.¹⁴ Rethinking the outcomes of degree programs and the work of faculty is high on the agenda of other professional associations, including NCPH and AASLH.

As the CGE report stressed, the vast majority of history graduate students fail to learn about public history in any systematic, structured way. Overall, academic training programs give little legitimacy to public history. By advocating for greater inclusion of public history in graduate education, *The Education of Historians in the 21st Century* suggests an important reorientation of graduate education. It advocates a broader preparation of historians through incorporating public history into the doctoral curriculum, developing internship programs, and including discussions about the public roles and responsibilities of the historian in the doctoral curriculum. It also calls for building collegial relationships between graduate departments and public history institutions. The CMD is explicitly including public history in its assessment of the purpose and desired outcomes of the MA degree, in ways that will better position degree holders for public history careers.¹⁵ Beyond the AHA, NCPH has a long-standing interest in curriculum development and issues related to certification (of individuals and programs), degree standards, and the articulation of competencies for degree holders. Currently, its Curriculum and Training Committee is surveying existing MA programs with the goal of developing broad curriculum guidelines for public history programs. This September, the Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate announced that history is one of six fields in which it will work with ten core and a number of collateral departments to re-think and re-structure doctoral programs.¹⁶ It is hoped that these initiatives will encourage additional graduate programs to review their curricula, including the degree to

¹⁴ Philip M. Katz, “Public History Employers—What Do They Want? A Report on the Survey,” *Perspectives* 41 (September 2003), 35-8.

¹⁵ Philip M. Katz, “Where is the Mastery in the History Master’s Degree?” *Perspectives* 41 (November 2003), 24-27.

¹⁶ Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, “Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate,” <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/CID/>. The other fields in the project are education, English, chemistry, math, and neuroscience.

which they prepare students to take a role in public life and to pursue careers in public history. With its solid academic base and historic commitment to graduate education, the Association is exceptionally well poised to exercise leadership in addressing these issues.

We know much less about the undergraduate history major. Anecdotal information suggests that at best service learning projects and internships introduce undergraduates to the venues where public historians work. In fact, most students probably leave their undergraduate major without a clear idea of the diverse career opportunities available to people with preparation in the discipline.

As the survey of public history employers revealed, employers complain that graduate students in history lack the competencies required to for professional positions within their institutions. Employers cited poor writing skills (a complaint hardly exclusive to public history employers), a lack of understanding of local history, and the inability to communicate with different audiences and to work collaboratively as common failings of PhD holders. Respondents' comments also signaled the deeper split between academic and public history – most do not look to history graduates to fill professional positions. This suggests a need to delineate the specific competencies a person with a public history degree (or public history concentration) should have; to consider carefully the role of public history practitioners in degree programs; and to develop ways of encouraging potential employers to hire graduates of public history programs. (Employment issues are discussed in greater detail under Charge 3).

Finally, many academically affiliated historians have indicated – in the task force's broad survey, and in numerous forums and conversations – a deep, abiding interest in public history. They would welcome opportunities to extend their educational role to beyond the academy, yet are inhibited from doing so by the academy's general disregard for such work. Newer faculty especially are constrained by promotion and tenure criteria that privilege traditional forms of research and publication. It is perhaps time to reconsider issues raised by the 1993 report of the AHA's Ad Hoc Committee on Redefining Scholarly Work, *Rethinking Historical Scholarship*, and for the Association to exercise leadership in advocating the value of public history scholarship.

Related issues have been raised by public historians hired to teach special or occasional courses within history departments. Because they often hold full time professional positions outside of teaching, their concerns may differ from other part-time faculty, though fair pay is of universal importance. Part-time public history faculty need to be fully included in the academic structure of the department. The relationship of their courses to the degree program and the overall curriculum needs to be clearly articulated. More generally, departments need to develop structured ways for students, faculty, and practitioners to interact professionally in ways integral to the curriculum. A final set of issues have been raised within the task force itself about faculty hired to teach in public history programs: What is an appropriate level of public history experience for such appointments? What kinds of public history involvements are congruent with a faculty appointment? What are appropriate criteria for their promotion and tenure? These and other questions need vetting within the profession.

Recommendations:

1. In order to sustain and expand the discussion of how graduate degree programs can acquaint students with public history work, suggest avenues for productive advocacy on behalf of the discipline, and bring public practice to the attention of existing faculty, follow up the CGE's *Education of Historians in the 21st Century* and the forthcoming report of the CMD with good practice articles in *Perspectives*, with efforts by the Professional Division to encourage and monitor their acceptance within the profession, and with sponsored sessions or discussions at the annual meeting of both the AHA and other historical organizations. (staff, Professional Division)
2. Within the CMD, continue attention to curriculum standards and the articulation of competencies for holders of the MA degree. Remain in contact with curricular and related discussions among public historians, particularly within the National Council on Public History. (Committee on Master's Degree, Professional Division, staff)
3. Reopen the discussion about what "counts" in the work of history faculty begun in *Rethinking Historical Scholarship*, with the goal of encouraging history departments to recognize a wide range of scholarly activities in hiring, tenure, and promotion decisions. Consider developing documents for department chairs and others on civic engagement and public history as legitimate scholarly activities; encouraging discussion of the issues in *Perspectives* and the annual meeting; and identifying departments that do have broad criteria for tenure and promotion. Include community college faculty in this discussion, as their scholarship frequently includes a direct relationship with the "community" they serve. (Professional Division)
4. Develop best practices documents on issues related to full time faculty teaching public history and on the relationship of part-time and adjunct public history faculty to history departments. Such documents might appropriately be developed in cooperation with NCPH. (Professional Division, Joint AHA-OAH Committee on Part-time and Adjunct Employment)
5. Develop strategies for better informing students about the variety of careers open to history degree holders. Possibilities include recommending that undergraduate programs use the Association's *Careers for Students of History* booklet as required reading in major seminars or as the basis for a discussion in departmental history clubs (here a companion "tip sheet" on how to use the pamphlet with undergraduates might prove helpful); and working with Phi Alpha Theta to distribute the pamphlet for discussion in local chapter forums at regional conferences, ideally including both faculty and public historian. Consider making the *Careers* booklet available electronically or at a greater discount than currently

offered to departments that participate in the Institutional Services Program.¹⁷
(staff)

6. Support the argument made in *The Education of Historians in the 21st Century* that the profession pay greater attention to employment opportunities for graduate students in both traditional public history careers and other nonacademic settings, including state and federal government, media, information technology, research, community service, and the private sector. Possible ways of doing so include reprinting the box, “Jobs Outside Academia,” published in the May and September 2003 *Perspectives*, in future issues; expanding efforts to solicit job ads from a variety of public history employers for *Perspectives* and the AHA Web site; linking to open job listings on other organizations’ Web sites (e.g. NCPH, AASLH); and developing “tip sheets” on how to find employment in non-academic positions. (staff, Professional Division)

7. To date, the TFPH has not engaged in discussion with the Teaching Division about teaching public history. It thus commends to itself the task of initiating such a conversation during its terminal year. Potentially fruitful areas of discussion include methods for incorporating public history methods into existing courses, ways of introducing students to the work of public historians, and promoting excellence in service learning projects and internship. (Task Force on Public History, Teaching Division)

¹⁷ The booklet costs \$7 for members, \$9 for non-members. An abridged version of the earlier edition of the booklet, “Careers for Students of History: A Mini-guide from the American Historical Association,” is online at <http://www.theaha.org/pubs/careers>.

Charge 3: What professional needs are voiced by public historians that membership in the AHA can and should address?

Not surprisingly, the task force learned from its surveys and conversations with public historians that many of them feel – and are – disconnected from their academic counterparts. We emphasize that this perception cuts quite deeply. Although some will undoubtedly remain disgruntled, most also articulate a desire for inclusion as equal members of the profession. They represent a potentially large group of new members for the AHA, as the overwhelming majority said that they were not members but would consider joining (or re-joining) if the Association better addressed their interests. Yet as we emphasize throughout this report, the issue is more than simple “outreach” to a particular constituency. By paying greater attention to public history, the Association can help all historians become more engaged with the public, expanding the profession’s notions of scholarship, audience, and employment and extending the reach of its standards of excellence.

Because this charge opened up so many fruitful areas of discussion and opportunities for action, discussion below has been divided into three sections: 1) services to public historians within existing AHA programs, 2) new opportunities for professional development, and 3) broader forms of advocacy for history, public history, and historians. Each section is further divided into specific topics; recommendations follow from each topical discussion but are numbered sequentially.

Expanding Current Services

ANNUAL MEETING: As the Association’s major collective activity, the annual meeting plays a crucial role in symbolizing, shaping, and reproducing the profession. While its function as a forum for scholarly exchange will always be central, much can be done to represent the range of interests, concerns, and needs of a more broadly conceived profession. In short, the Association can expand the content and format of sessions and the professional services offered to attendees and cultivate a public presence for the meeting. The task force understands the tendency toward cultural reproduction rather than innovation in a form that requires intensive, complex work by a committee charged with delivering a finished program in a relatively short period. It therefore believes that the president, Research Division, and AHA staff must take the lead in developing models, forms, and procedures for the meeting and commends the Research Division’s current efforts to rethink the format of the meeting.¹⁸

The task force recognizes that implementing the recommendations below will require reorientation of the work of both Program and Local Arrangements Committees, as well as staff involved in annual meeting planning. The PC will need to be more proactive in developing sessions or identifying those who can do so. The appointment of public historians to the committee, as recommended under Charge 1, can help expand the committee’s networks, but implementing recommended changes is of necessity the

¹⁸ Roy Rosenzweig, “Should the Format of the Annual Meeting Be Changed?,” *Perspectives* 41:6 (September 2003: 21-23).

responsibility of the entire committee. Even more important, the Local Arrangements Committee needs to be reconceived as a local resource committee, charged with incorporating the resources of the host city and region into the meeting and with reaching out to a broader range of working historians and institutions in the region. The PC and LAC should also work together to shape the program as an integrated package. This, in turn, requires that, at minimum, the LAC chair be appointed at least one year prior to the meeting and that the LAC finalize its plans in time to be included in the printed program. The task force recognizes staff members' recent efforts to work with the LAC on these changes.

Recommendations:

1. Recruit innovative session proposals involving public history and encourage session organizers to include public historians in thematic sessions, with the goal of both highlighting and mainstreaming public history and public historians. The task force favorably notes that the 2005 Call for Proposals invites proposals from both "academic and nonacademic" members of the Association. Building on this, explicitly encourage the inclusion of public historians on panels in future calls. (President, permanent divisions and committees, staff, Program Committee)
2. Paralleling a shift in the content of sessions at the annual meeting, shift the format of some sessions away from the dominant mode of reading and commenting on formal papers, to include more roundtables, forums, and other innovative formats. These need not be any less serious, but can help establish the annual meeting as a forum for critical conversations among all historians. (Research Division, other divisions and committees, Program Committee, staff)
3. Include "how to" sessions and workshops on the program. Focusing attention on specific dimensions of practice (e.g. historic preservation) is one way to highlight the AHA's interest in an expanded notion of what constitutes history and who constitutes the historical profession. Linking these sessions to parallel academic sessions can demonstrate that such topics and issues are integral to the meeting and to the profession. (divisions and committees, Program Committee, affiliated societies [see #5, below], staff)
4. Routinely include the full range of career opportunities available to historians, including both careers in public history and related fields and broader notions of public practice for academic colleagues, in sessions on employment and careers. Also feature the broadest possible range of career choices in the job register. These actions can be crucial in signaling to newer professionals that the AHA considers such career choices as normal and indeed, exciting, not marginal or the unfortunate result of a chronically depressed academic job market. (Professional Division, Committee on Graduate Students, staff)

5. Encourage the National Council on Public History, the Society for History in the Federal Government, and the Association for State and Local History to develop sponsored sessions for the annual meeting. (Program Committee, TFPH, staff)
6. Consider ways of bringing the annual meeting program into the host city and the city into the program. One way to do this is to schedule sessions at nearby historical sites and organizations, affording local historians an opportunity to present their work and familiarize attendees with resources and opportunities in public history. Another is to encourage local institutions/groups to host events for historians attending the annual meeting. Yet another, more challenging possibility is to open up meeting sessions/events to public audiences – for example high visibility sessions to which “the local public” is invited. (Program and Local Arrangements Committees, staff)

EMPLOYMENT: The task force’s surveys – as well as numerous conversations with colleagues – revealed considerable concern about a number of employment issues, including the privileging of academic positions in *Perspectives* job market reports; the dearth of data about historians’ nonacademic career tracks and the conditions of public history employment; and, in general, the assumption that the academy is the preferred employment venue for all historians. Of particular concern is employers’ failure to hire historians for work that involves knowledge of history and an ability to synthesize and assess large amounts of data. Experts with training in other fields are routinely hired to prepare historical exhibits, manage historic sites, write histories of agencies and organizations, and prepare historical reports, as well as assess programs, review policies, and manage cultural resources. Colleagues fault professional associations, including the AHA, for failing to make the case that these forms of work are best accomplished by professionals trained in the discipline. To address these concerns, the AHA needs to take steps to raise the visibility and legitimacy of nonacademic forms of employment, understand historians’ career tracks, and improve employment opportunities for historians.

Recommendations:

7. As a long term goal, expand data collection on employment to include a broad range of public history employment opportunities and career trajectories. When possible, include such information in job reports published in *Perspectives*; if these reports do not include data about public history, retitle them to make clear their focus on *academic* employment. The task force understands extant data sets make it difficult to extract information about public history. It thus endorses the recommendation in *The Education of Historians in the 21st Century* that graduate departments keep placement records for *all* their graduates; and supports the AHA’s involvement with the American Academy of Arts and Sciences’ Humanities Indicators Project, a broad initiative to compile and analyze data about humanities fields. (Professional Division, in conjunction with appropriate external organizations; staff)

8. Investigate the extent to which independent historians and adjunct faculty do contract work in public history. Assess and take steps to address the concerns of these historians and, insofar as it is possible, integrate part-time public history employment into the agenda of the Joint AHA-OAH Committee on Part-Time and Adjunct Employment. (Part-Time/Adjunct Employment Committee, working with the Coalition of Independent Scholars and the Coalition on the Academic Workforce).

9. Develop a broad advocacy program to encourage employers to hire professionals trained in history to do historical work, insofar as possible in conjunction with NCPH, SHFG, and AASLH. Such advocacy can fruitfully be linked to competencies encouraged for degree programs and graduates, currently under discussion by the Committee on the Master's Degree. It can include a number of specific, feasible steps, as follows. First, develop an official document outlining the skills a professional historian brings to the workplace; and suggesting basic degree, experience, and professional accomplishments for different history positions, from entry-level staff to senior administrators. On its own, such a document would allow historians to explain to employers what expert skills they possess that those trained in other fields do not. Second, widely promulgate this document among potential employers, to encourage them to hire qualified staff. Third, initiate discussions with the American Association of Museums and other public history professional organizations to press for the hiring of trained historians for positions in local, state, and national historical sites, museums, and organizations; and for making appropriate training in history among staff a criterion for accreditation. Finally, public historians have long discussed the certification of historians, that is, the official recognition of an individual as possessing certain skills and bodies of knowledge by a certifying board, as a means of advancing professionalism in the field. While such an idea seems largely incongruous with the professional culture of historians, the discussion nonetheless merits monitoring by the AHA. (Professional Division, staff)

10. Working with SHFG and NCPH as well as the National Coalition for History, advocate the redefinition of job qualifications for historians within the federal government, arguing that civil service rules should require those who work as federal historians to meet standards equal to those set for government scientists. (Professional Division, staff)

MEMBER SERVICES: Survey responses from public historians indicated a willingness to join the Association if it offered a membership package that appealed to them. Many especially find the *American Historical Review* too focused on scholarly articles, noting a preference for review articles or continuing education materials that would help them stay current with research in a given field. For example, AHA pamphlets synthesizing recent historiography fill the need for an overview of the literature when developing an exhibit on a particular subject. Not surprisingly, many survey responses suggested offering discounted membership to public historians, or a subscription that includes *Perspectives* but not the *AHR*. The task force understands that important financial considerations make this impractical. However, the expense of membership in multiple organizations is

a real problem and, per recommendation under Charge 1, a joint membership in the AHA and a public history organization such as NCPH or AASLH might be considered. More generally, while implementing any number of the recommendations in this report may encourage public historians to become members of the Association, providing specific services to address articulated needs will play a particular role.

Recommendations:

11. To create wider awareness of the AHA's ongoing activities and market the electronic version of *Perspectives*, regularly post announcements of *Perspectives* articles of interest to public historians to H-Public, H-Museum, and other listservs. (staff)
12. Market AHA pamphlets to public historians by advertising in public history publications and listservs, as well as on the AHA Web site. Also consider developing pamphlets that would serve historians in public practice – fundraising and developing a consulting business are repeatedly identified as topics of interest. (staff)
13. Consider publishing more frequent review or “state of the art” articles in the *AHR* to enable public historians – and all historians – to remain current with research in specific fields. Post notice of these articles on public history listservs, with a link to the History Cooperative. (*AHR* editorial staff)
14. Consider publishing reviews of various forms of public history, including exhibits, interpretive activities at historic sites, and Web sites, in the *AHR*. In addition to subjecting public history to critical review, this would help legitimize forms of public practice to the entire profession. (*AHR* editorial staff)
15. Provide a regular and highly visible place for recognizing innovative professional work in public history within the AHA's prize structure. The existing Herbert Feis Award, which recognizes a publication written by a public or independent historian, could be redefined to recognize museum exhibits and other forms of public history scholarship. An additional award, either funded or honorific, could be developed, perhaps jointly with a public history organization. (Research Division)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: Historians in the academy and public historians both express interest in learning more about each other's work and in working together more effectively. The former want to learn strategies and skills of public practice, especially ways to reach a wider audience with their research. The latter want more interaction with the world of scholarship. Yet few opportunities exist for the sort of continuing education that might bring the two groups together to learn from each other. Existing professional development programs are not grounded in history and occur in venues and forms unfamiliar to historians. This suggests the need for professional development opportunities for historians, especially those encouraging collaboration

between academic and public historians. To this end, representatives of the AHA, OAH, NCPH, and AASLH met at the 2003 Organization of American Historians' meeting and will meet again at the 2004 AHA meeting, to explore ways to configure and fund a possible pilot professional development program. In addition, the TFPH sponsored a successful session at the recent Federation of State Humanities Councils meeting on recent trends in Southern history, as a way of alerting that constituency to new scholarship in the field.

Recommendations

16. Continue to publish articles on collaborations between historians in academe and their public history colleagues in *Perspectives*. While the series of articles on the Teaching American History program to appear in coming months will include attention to this issue, additional articles might highlight successful collaborations on programming, grant writing, consultations, exhibits, and curriculum. These might ultimately be consolidated into a single "collaborations in public history" space on the AHA Web site, analogous to the K-16 Teaching Collaboratives space. (staff)
17. Develop and offer opportunities for professional development at the annual meeting, to serve both public and academic historians; and explore the value of offering professional development credit for these programs. Topics might include grant and proposal writing, working with amateur historians on local projects, business skills for freelance consultants, etc. Should these prove successful, consider presenting a series of workshops and seminars around the country, independent of the annual meeting, perhaps in collaboration with an established public history program or organization. The workshop on electronic publishing on the 2004 meeting program is a good step in this direction. (Program Committee, Professional Division, staff)
18. Develop AHA-sponsored sessions for the annual meetings of other historical and humanities organizations, including "state of the art" presentations, sessions about academic and public history collaborations, and sessions that bring academic and public historians together to consider interpretive issues from their particular vantage points. (TFPH, Professional and Research Divisions, staff)
19. Pursue the collaborative project discussed at the 2003 OAH meeting. (TFPH, staff)

Broader Advocacy for History, Public History and Historians

STATE-LEVEL ADVOCACY: Among the clearest messages emerging from both internal task force discussions and the survey data, as well as from conversations with colleagues, is the desire for the AHA to engage in strong advocacy for public history at the local, state, and federal levels. In part this means advocating for sound public interpretations of the past; it especially means advocating for public funding for historical programs and

sites. Although many colleagues are regrettably unaware of the AHA's advocacy at the national level, its efforts in this arena are outstanding. It is at the state level that greater attention is needed. It is within the individual states that most public historical activity is carried out and funded – in historical societies, archives, heritage tourism initiatives, historic preservation programs, etc. – much of it below the radar screen of the Association and its members, who do, after all, reside in specific states. Recent crises threatening the elimination of state funding for state history offices and programs in New Jersey, Wisconsin, Florida and elsewhere underscore the need for state level advocacy. They also reveal the connection between supporting public history and sustaining professional history in general. Vigorous public history programs within states support excellence in the history presented and provide professional opportunities for historians. As a modest effort to stimulate awareness of public history at the state level, the task force has initiated a series of *Perspectives* articles on “taking care of history in the states,” focusing on a particular public history issue within a given state as a way to open up broader questions about the practice of/funding for/advocacy for/organization of public history. The first article, by TF member Jamil Zainaldin writing about Georgia, appeared in the November 2003 issue.

Recommendations:

20. Continue the “taking care of history in the states” series. (staff, TFPH)
21. Prominently feature direct links to pages and sites spotlighting state level issues and a broad range of advocacy efforts on the AHA Web site. The site should also communicate more effectively the AHA's on-going advocacy efforts. (staff)
22. Initiate a conversation with AHA staff and Bruce Craig, Executive Director of the National Coalition for History, about the possible development of resources and networks for history advocacy at the state level. Other historical organizations – OAH, AASLH – might fruitfully be included in these discussions, including discussion of funding for an additional part-time staff member to work on state-level advocacy issues. (TFPH)

A MORE INFORMED PUBLIC: In replies to the TFPH's survey, AHA members consistently decried the media's presentation of history, expressing enormous frustration at the disparity between the availability of historical knowledge, represented by the tremendous expertise of the profession, and the shallowness, sloppiness, and even total disregard for history evidenced in movie making, television, and reporting.

There are exceptions to this generalization. We can point to examples of journalists, film makers, popular writers, documentaries, and even a television channel that acknowledge professional history. Likewise, there is no shortage (as our survey showed) of AHA members with expertise in many fields, eager to engage a broader audience. The task force has struggled to identify ways to connect historians with the media to deepen the public's understanding accurate and thoughtful history. An AHA connection with popular history through *American Heritage* magazine or the History Channel, for

example, might help leverage greater involvement with these media by members and contribute to raising the standards of history that reaches the public through the media. Another possibility is for the AHA to become an active resource for popular media so that AHA members can be identified as expert consultants. The History News Service (HNS) and the History News Network (HNN) are existing means by which historians are developing a credible, recognizable voice on the World Wide Web and in print media. AHA staff member Miriam Hauss regularly provides journalists with contact information for AHA members who can comment on specific issues. However, the working styles of historians and the press are significantly different.¹⁹ Reporters working on a deadline frequently are unable to reach a historian in time. Increasingly, they turn to the Internet when they need background information on a particular subject.

The task force thus considered one other professional organization's solution to the problem of connecting scholars to the media. The American Academy of Religion (AAR) has undertaken an ambitious project to connect journalists with academic experts in religion by means of a Web site that links reporters seeking information or commentary on a specific topic with an expert in the field. Developing a similar mechanism for connecting historians to journalists is appealing. It is also expensive – the AAR received a multi-million dollar grant to hire two full-time staff people and to develop specialized software, and the final product requires ongoing oversight. But after a certain point, the online “connector” does the work. A similar initiative at the AHA would require substantial additional resources, and fundamental questions remain about how journalists might respond to such a tool. Nonetheless, it opens up intriguing possibilities for connecting historians to journalists and ultimately altering the way history is portrayed in the popular media.

The task force notes that the mission statement of the developing National History Center includes “the advancement of historical knowledge in government, business, and the public at large.” Should plans for the center come to fruition, it too could appropriately develop programs to connect historians with journalists.

The larger point in this discussion of historians' relationship with the media, however, is the need for all historians to cultivate ways of sharing their expertise with a public both misinformed and eager to learn more about history. One specific way the AHA can advance this ethic is through collaborations with organizations, such as the Federation of State Humanities Councils, that can promote structured ways of connecting historians with public audiences.

Recommendations:

23. Initiate conversation with the History Channel, and perhaps *American Heritage*, to determine if there is interest in more systematically connecting with historians with particular expertise; and to consider opportunities for collaboration. (staff, Council members, divisions, TFPH)

¹⁹ Kate Coe, “On the Prowl for Telegenic Experts,” *Chronicle of Higher Education* 49 (1 August 2003): C3.

24. Consult with the media to consider ways of developing more systematic channels of communication between journalists and historians and, more generally, how to encourage better representation of history in the media. To begin the process, consider developing, perhaps in conjunction with a reputable journalism school, an annual meeting session or *Perspectives* article on the relationship between historians and the media, to involve media professionals who then might begin a more long term relationship with the AHA. (Professional Division, staff)
25. Should the National History Center reach a stage of active program development, use that institution as a forum for connecting historians with journalists and other media professionals. (staff)
26. Consider initiating discussion with the Federation of State Humanities Council (and perhaps other organizations) about potential collaborations. Discussions might assess ways historians have worked with communities in the past, consider specific resources historians might offer local communities, and look toward the development of joint projects.²⁰ (TFPH, Professional Division, staff)

²⁰ The March 2002 joint report of the Association of American Universities and Federation of State Humanities Councils Task Force, "Humanities Partnerships: University-State Council Collaboration recommendations includes the following: "Professional societies should be encouraged to address the value of collaborative activities. . . . The directors of professional societies such as . . . the American Historical Association . . . should be encouraged to emphasize community services – and specifically, collaboration with state and local humanities organizations – as an important component of a well rounded and rewarding scholarly career." (p. 15)

Charge 4: The degree to which various professional standards and practices published by the AHA adequately reflect and serve the needs of public historians

The task force responded to this charge by assessing the AHA's *Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct* in light of the two assumptions governing our work. We considered the extent to which the *Statement* reflects a broad understanding of the role of public history and engagement in the lives of all historians and how it addresses the specific conditions of professional life outside the academy. The task force recognizes that the *Statement* articulates the professional practices and ethical principles that have guided historians for the past 27 years. Yet it also recognizes that the document carries a special burden: because the AHA itself represents the broadest spectrum of history, historians, and historical activities, the *Statement* must be inclusive in its definition of who makes up the profession and what comprises professional work.

In spring 2003, the task force submitted a substantial critique of the *Statement on Standards* to the Professional Division. Our comments built on the work of former division member James Grossman, who undertook a similar exercise when the division first began its consideration of public history. A copy of that critique is included in **Appendix 4**. To summarize our concerns: The guiding paradigm of the *Statement* is the scholar-teacher. Despite the AHA's efforts to update the document and extend its reach, it is of limited relevance to public history, public historians, and public service. In places the *Statement* actually runs counter to public history concerns as the task force has defined them, including its overly limited definition of "public service" and its failure to adequately take into account the particular circumstances of workplaces outside the academy. The document is also marred by some confusion in voice and audience. While some of these shortcomings—from the standpoint of public history—result from an accretion of additions and revisions to the *Standards*, the net effect is to deprive the document of the clarity and consistency it strives to attain.

Partially in response to the TFPH's critique, the Professional Division has initiated a major revision of the *Statement on Standards* and has articulated a "new emphasis on developing resources for historians seeking guidance about various aspects of their professional lives."²¹ The task force has suggested several ways to advance this project in its previous reports to the division; these are codified below as recommendations. Members of the TFPH would be pleased to work with the Professional Division to draft or suggest authors for specific items and to review drafted material.

Recommendations:

1. Write and promulgate widely a single, short, non-legalistic statement that identifies a guiding ethos or fundamental principles applicable to all persons engaged in professional historical activity, whatever their specific circumstances, employment, and interests. This document should affirm the profession's

²¹ "Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct to Be Revised – Suggestions Invited," *Perspectives* 41:6 (September 2003): 20.

- unwavering commitment to such values as the integrity of sources, civility in professional discourse, honesty in acknowledging the work of others, fairness in hiring, and respectful working conditions. It should also explicitly affirm the value of public practice and public engagement for all historians. (Professional Division)
2. Because these fundamental principles play out differently in different occupational and professional settings, supplement the initial statement with a range of guidelines, statements, and best practices documents that identify values and preferences appropriate to those different settings. Other sections of this report identify issues relevant to public history that can appropriately be included in such guidelines; we summarize key concerns on the following page. While the framework and organization of these proposed documents will be refined as the division continues to consider and develop them, we would suggest that some subjects may appropriately be discussed in a separate document (or documents) specific to public history (e.g. hiring and employment practices), or a specific subset of public history practice; others as part of a broader discussion of a given subject (e.g. part-time employment, teaching). (Professional Division)
 3. Supplement these guidelines with “tip sheets” or short essays addressing professional concerns in an informed and informal manner. On the following page is a short list of public history topics that might lend themselves to tip sheets; existing *Perspectives* articles might be edited to create some of these or related documents. (Professional Division, staff)
 4. Consult with other historical organizations, including NCPH and AASLH, in the development of certain documents, as appropriate.
 5. Widely promulgate these statements, guidelines, and other documents, including posting them on the AHA Web site. Also include on the Web site best practices statements already developed or endorsed by the AHA, such as the *Standards for Museum Exhibits*, and links to statements of professional standards developed by other public history organizations. Important documents include the American Association for State and Local History’s *Statement of Professional Ethics*, the National Council on Public History’s *Ethical Guidelines for the Historian*, the Oral History Association’s *Oral History Evaluation Guidelines*, and the Society for History in the Federal Government’s *Principles and Standards for Federal Historical Programs*. (Professional Division)

Proposed Advisory Documents

Employment Guidelines

- Discussion of hiring practices and conditions within a variety of public history institutions, including museums; local, state, and federal agencies; profit and nonprofit organizations; et al
- Guidelines for professional development for public historians, specifying the resources that public history professionals need to develop and sustain competencies, skills, and expertise (e.g. funding for research and conference travel, sabbaticals, research assistance, relief from administrative responsibilities, and ongoing professional development opportunities)
- As discussed above under Charge 3, outline the skills an historian brings to an employer and the value and importance of hiring trained professionals to do history. A related document is a discussion of hiring standards for public history positions within nonacademic institutions including recommended training, experience, etc.
- Guidelines on conditions of part-time employment within public history institutions
- Hiring guidelines for public history positions within academic institutions, to include the assessment of prior public history employment
- Guidelines for the part-time employment of public historians in a post secondary institution
- Guidelines for assessing public history involvements in promotion and tenure decisions

Professional Standards

- Discussion of the professional and ethical concerns relevant to “doing history” in a variety of settings (including intellectual autonomy, working as part of a team, and other issues), including historic preservation and cultural resource management programs, filmmaking, museums, monuments, historical sites, journalism, etc.
- Guidelines for core competencies for the MA degree in history, with attention to public history and its various fields, perhaps developed by the Committee on the Master’s Degree
- Guidelines for developing an MA program in public history, done in conjunction with NCPH
- Discussion of how the professional value of openness relates to claims of national security, corporate secrecy, and personal privacy
- Discussion of the professional obligations of teaching in a variety of settings in addition to the classroom, including museums and “the public square”
- Discussion of the professional obligations that inhere in what are frequently understood as “public service” activities, including giving expert testimony, advising on public policy, serving on a public commission, and public advocacy activities

“Tip Sheets” or Informed and Informal Advice

- How to get a job in public history
- How to get a history job with the federal government
- How to talk to the media
- How to talk to public audiences
- How to work with filmmakers
- On becoming a consultant
- Effective collaborations between public and academic historians

Charge 5: Ways in which the AHA could cooperate on public history issues and initiatives with public history organizations, particularly NCPH and SHFG.

Those who define themselves as public historians often find their professional home in the National Council on Public History, the Society for History in the Federal Government, and increasingly, the reinvigorated American Association for State and Local History, which the task force has added to this “cooperating” charge. This is quite appropriate: many historians find that their most satisfying professional affiliations are with colleagues and organizations in their specific fields. Yet the AHA has been since its inception the umbrella professional association for *all* historians, articulating and advocating for the highest standards of historical practice and creating a place where all can come together to advance their mutual interests. To continue its historic role as a big tent, the AHA must work to more fully integrate public history and public historians into its programs and, more generally, into the historical profession. Close associations with NCPH, SHFG, and AASLH can considerably assist in this effort.

While many members of these organizations may distance themselves from academic historians, and some are not professionally trained in the discipline of history, they focus on the historical past and work assiduously to provide opportunities for wide sectors of the general public to engage with history. They serve audiences that range from professional historians to devoted amateurs to individuals with only a casual interest in history. Collectively, their programs, publications, exhibits, and presentations appeal to a wide public, and their audiences cut across age groups, educational and economic levels, neighborhoods, nationalities, and races. They clearly share the AHA's commitment to fostering a better understanding of the past. Moreover, the organizations themselves share the AHA's interest in professional standards on a variety of issues, including curriculum, hiring policies and conditions of work, and the quality of historical interpretation. They are logical partners for the AHA as it develops a more inclusive agenda.

While the Association has made overtures toward these organizations in recent years, it has done little to promote substantial dialogue and cooperative ventures. Indeed, as task force members have talked with their representatives over the past two years, there has been a decided note of coolness: “Why now?” they appropriately ask. “How will affiliation with the AHA serve my interests?” Hence, as the AHA seeks collaborations with these organizations, it must do so carefully, recognizing that they may question the Association's motives; recognizing too that they have been laboring for years in areas where the AHA may now wish to be more active. The AHA must also bear in mind that, although it is the umbrella organization for all historians, any collaborative efforts in which it engages must be done in a spirit of equal partnership, with an ethic of inclusion, not outreach, and a recognition that public historians often operate with different assumptions and in different modes than their academic colleagues.

The previous four sections of this report include a number of recommendations for specific projects and activities to be undertaken in collaboration or consultation with one or more public history organizations (e.g. membership development, creation of

professional development opportunities, reciprocal sponsorship of sessions at annual meetings, review of the *Statement on Standards*). We do not reprise them here, only affirm that the AHA will necessarily collaborate with these organizations as it takes a more proactive approach to public history. Here we outline additional recommendations for cultivating cooperative relationships. The task force believes that organizational collaboration opens up opportunities for more localized collaboration among *members*, arguably of more significance in efforts to integrate academic and public history. Our recommendations reflect this broader view.

Recommendations:

1. Active participation by AHA staff members in meetings of the NCPH, SHFG, and AASLH as AHA representatives. Attendance by individual AHA Council members at these meetings, insofar as it is practical. This rather modest action can serve to improve communication, cultivate networks, and work to end public historians' misconception of the AHA. It may also open up opportunities for deepening relationships between the AHA and these organizations. Here we note with enthusiasm the recent participation of Debbie Ann Doyle on the AASLH Program Committee; and the open forums CGE Research Director Philip Katz organized at recent NCPH meetings. (staff, Council)
2. Establish regular channels of communication with public history organizations to encourage them to think of the Association as a supportive network in matters of common concern. Regular communication could also broaden the AHA's base of support for its own initiatives. Communication can range from simple efforts at information sharing, to modest requests for information or contacts, to mutual involvement in each others meetings and programs, to support for advocacy and other initiatives. As a gesture in this direction, the task force notes with favor the inclusion of the AASLH's "Statement of Concern Supporting State and Local Historical Agencies" in the September 2003 *Perspectives*. (staff, divisions)
3. Assuming the Council acts favorably on this report, publicly and visibly announce the AHA's developing relationship with public history, as both a valued form of practice for all historians and as a specific kind of practice/practitioner with particular interests and concerns, parallel in importance to those of research and teaching. (staff, Professional Division, Task Force on Public History)
4. During the task force's terminal year, consider developing a symposium or similar program on the subject of "making histories public." This program would have a twofold purpose: to encourage respectful dialogue among academic and public historians about the relationship between scholarship and public audiences; and to signal, in a way visible to the profession, the AHA's interest in seriously engaging with issues of public history. While NCPH, AASLH, and/or SHFG would be appropriate collaborators for such a program, the goal would be to promote cooperation among the *members* of these organizations. Clearly, this is a long term project, one that would require considerable resources, and not one that the

task force can fully plan during its final year. It can, however, refine the idea, consider its viability, begin to define a structure, and consider sources of funding. It is the kind of program that the National History Center, should it come to fruition, might appropriately sponsor. (Task Force on Public History)

5. Secure ideas and support for the developing National History Center from public historians. If the center is established, offer professional development programs for public historians and include public historians in its leadership. These actions are in line with the mission statement of the Center, which defines it as “a public trust devoted equally to the professional study and teaching of history and to the advancement of historical knowledge in government, business, and the public at large.” The NHC would thus be well positioned to promote civic engagement by professional historians and forge links between historians and the public. (staff, National History Center Planning Committee)

PART III: THE AHA AND PUBLIC HISTORY: LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

Key Recommendations:

This report includes fifty-one recommendations. Many are quite modest or can be implemented in current AHA activities with little difficulty. Some are already underway. Several, however, are “new business” for the Association and implementation will require greater thought and attention. Among these the TFPH has identified the following priorities. We do not prioritize within this group; we believe them to be of equal importance.

- Reopen the discussion about what “counts” in the work of history faculty, with the goal of encouraging history departments to recognize a wide range of scholarly activities in hiring, tenure, and promotion decisions
- Change the substance and form of the annual meeting to be more inclusive of public history and public historians
- Develop a broad advocacy program to encourage employers to hire professionals trained in history to do historical work
- Initiate conversation with the History Channel, and perhaps *American Heritage*, to determine if there is interest in more systematically connecting with historians with particular expertise; and to consider opportunities for collaboration
- Consult with the media to consider ways of developing more systematic channels of communication between journalists and historians and, more generally, how to encourage better representation of history in the media
- Revise the *Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct* as suggested under Charge 4 and as planned by the Professional Division

Next Steps:

Assuming that Council acts favorably upon this report, the next step is to circulate it widely, both publicly, on the AHA Web site, and within the AHA, among divisions and committees. Recommendations need to be consolidated and referred to relevant bodies for further consideration and, it is hoped, implementation.

At its June 2003 meeting, Council extended the tenure of the TFPF for an additional year, through 2004, to both consolidate its work to date and to assist in the development of a public history agenda throughout the AHA. It thus will be pleased to work with AHA staff, divisions, and committees during 2004 to begin implementation of its recommendations, especially the six priorities listed above.

In addition, this report commends to the TFPH itself further consideration of several possible new initiatives, as follows. It is not likely that resources will be available to implement all of them. Hence, during its terminal year the task force will assess and then

recommend implementation of those that are most viable, and can most effectively promote a public history agenda.

- Discussion with the Teaching Division about possible new initiatives broadly related to teaching public history
- Creation of a professional development project in collaboration with other history organizations, designed to bring academic and public historians together in an ongoing, collegial relationship (analogous to professional development projects that bring K-16 teachers together for long term collaborative work)
- Discussion with the Federation of State Humanities Councils, and perhaps with other organizations, about potential collaborations
- Discussion with Bruce Craig of the National Coalition for History and others about the development of resources and networks for state level advocacy for history
- Consideration of a symposium on “making histories public,” as a means of encouraging dialogue between academic and public historians about the relationship between scholarship and public audiences

The task force believes it is important that the Association undertake one or more highly visible, well-publicized new initiatives that will signal to members, to the profession, and perhaps to the public that the AHA has public history squarely on its agenda. In a wrap up report at the end of 2004, it will identify one or more such initiatives.

Institutionalization of Public History:

Throughout its tenure, the TFPH has considered the question of how to institutionalize substantive, sustained attention to public history within the structure of the AHA. To date, we have not settled this issue. Because the Council has extended the Task Force’s tenure for an additional year – and assuming it acts favorably on this report - we, along with AHA staff, will have several months to consider initial efforts to implement our recommendations. We will thus be in a better position to make an informed recommendation about where to locate responsibility for public history within the AHA at the end of 2004.

Nonetheless, it may be helpful here to lay out the options and to solicit the advice of Council. The options, as we see them, are essentially three: to diffuse responsibility for public history throughout the entire organizational structure; to place primary responsibility for public history within the Professional Division; or to establish a separate public history division or committee. The report itself suggests that the first option may be preferable, in that responsibility for implementing the various recommendations is distributed throughout the entire AHA structure. This perhaps is the best means of integrating public history throughout the entire range of AHA programs, policies, and actions; and hence of effecting the transformation the task force believes an embrace of public history can have upon both the Association and the profession. Yet placing responsibility for public history “everywhere” can also have the effect of placing

it nowhere. Attention to specific recommendations can get lost in already full agendas, themselves often shaped by the interests of a given vice president or chair.

Thus, the second option, placing responsibility for public history within the Professional Division has a certain appeal. The discussions that led to the establishment of the TFPH took place within the PD; the task force has reported to Council through this division; and the division's new mission specifically includes "addressing concerns relating to the practice of public history." We understand this to be the option preferred by both the division itself and AHA staff. The problem here is twofold: assigning responsibility for implementing recommendations lying outside of the division's responsibility, such as the annual meeting; and the election of a division chair who may not be especially familiar with, committed to, or interested in a public history agenda.

The third option, establishing a separate public history division or committee, would give public history considerable visibility within the Association and create a structure for developing and implementing new initiatives. Yet, as with the PD, a new division or committee would have no authority over the work of other entities within the Association. It might also marginalize public history within the AHA, thereby running absolutely counter to the task force's whole approach to public history. Moreover, establishing a new division would require a constitutional change, a lengthy and potentially contentious process that could fail. Establishing a new committee, parallel to the committees on minorities and women historians, would identify public historians as a special interest group, again something the TFPH has worked hard to avoid.

Wherever public history ultimately is located within the AHA's structure, it is very clear to us that primary responsibility for implementing the task force's recommendations, and thus for deepening the Association's commitment to public history and public historians, lies with the staff and especially with the executive director. We are confident in Arnita Jones's leadership and in the abilities of her staff to address our recommendations insofar as resources and the balance of priorities permit.