

Perspectives

Possible Educations for Archivists: Integrating Graduate Archival Education with Public History Education Programs

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Abstract: Recent discussions regarding archival education have replaced the debate over administrative position with discussions on how to improve archival curricula in the universities. However, little has been said about how this curricula will be integrated with the educational programs of the allied professions. The author looks at the opportunities and problems of integrating with public history education programs. He examines three areas: how public history education can enhance archival education; problems between archivists and public historians that must change to ensure the success of educational integration; and key concepts to consider as part of public history programs' educational mission to better accommodate an improved archival curriculum.

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MOST ARCHIVISTS RECOGNIZE THAT formal archival education is more than one-third library training, one-third history education, and one-third practical experience. Archivists assert that theirs is a distinct profession, and many insist further debate concerning venues for archival education is no longer productive. Instead, recent discussions focus on curricular content rather than on appropriate educational vehicles. As such, these discussions are considered beneficial for the improvement of archival education and demonstrative of a maturing profession.¹

With fewer than three thousand archivists holding membership in the national professional organization, the Society of American Archivists, the establishment of stand-alone schools of archival studies would be difficult at best.² The education of archivists will continue to be carried out in the educational programs of allied professions. Arguments centering on a professional curriculum, then, must necessarily take account of the programs in which this curriculum is offered. Unfortunately, little has been said about these allied disciplines, their educational programs, and, in particular, their missions and traditions. An investigation into the means to integrate archival curricula with allied educational programs must play a significant role in any consideration of archival education.³

¹Examples are Frank Boles, "Archival Education: Basic Characteristics and Core Curriculum," *AHA Perspectives* 28 (October 1990): 1-11; Susan E. Davis, "Archival Education: The Next Step," *Midwestern Archivist* 14 (Spring 1989): 13-21.

²The number of individual members of the Society of American Archivists (SAA) is not fully representative of the true number of professional archivists. Some of these non-SAA-member archivists may express their professional identity through membership in regional archival organizations or in allied professional organizations, such as the American Association for State and Local History. Many others may not maintain professional organization memberships at all.

³In his article, "Archival Education and the Need for Full-Time Faculty" (*American Archivist* 51 [Sum-

The discipline of public history, which has aided history departments in preparing their students for history-related careers beyond the academy, has great potential for enhancing the training and education of archivists.⁴ The work of public historians is defined as "promoting the utility of history in society through professional practice."⁵ Finding uses for history in our society certainly is of interest to archivists.⁶ With overlapping and complementary missions existing between the archival profession and the public history community, their educational programs can and should enjoy the same relationship. Public history education programs offer one of the best areas in which archival education programs can be initiated, nurtured, and expanded.

The Formation of Public History Programs

Public history programs formed in the 1980s in response to academic graduate

mer 1988]: 260-61), Paul Conway states that "Rich opportunities for focused studies on archival issues exist within a broad range of academic fields. The intellectual and practical contributions of the archival profession will be enhanced, not undermined, by research and teaching based within the educational programs of the allied professions."

⁴See Richard J. Cox, "Archivists and Public Historians in the United States" (*Public Historian* 8 [Summer 1986]: 43), in which Cox notes, "Public history education provides an excellent arena for an interdisciplinary approach that could study many essential and interesting archival concerns." See also Lawrence J. McCrank, "Public Historians in the Information Professions: Problems in Education and Credentials," *Public Historian* 7 (Summer 1983): 16.

Among the history-related fields commonly included within the purview of public history are public policy analysis; legal research; corporate information services; federal, state, and local history; oral history; archival and records management; historic preservation; museum administration; cultural resources management; and historical editing and publishing.

⁵Mission statement in the National Council on Public History brochure, 1986.

⁶Whose mission is the "identification, preservation, and use of records of enduring value." *Planning for the Archival Profession: A Report of the SAA Task Force on Goals and Priorities* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1986).

history programs' indifference toward the history-related professions. Academic historians such as Robert Kelley of the University of California at Santa Barbara, one of the founders of the modern public history movement, created sound public history programs to formalize the professional education imparted to students pursuing history-related careers.⁷ These programs allow students to become acquainted with nonteaching historical professions. They offer a solid base of history education, initial career-related training, and practical work experiences through practica, fellowships, and part-time jobs. Public history programs also can prepare students to collect and care for the historical record, in all its physical forms, and to make these resources available for use by the general public and other specific audiences.

One of the signal contributions public history programs can make to the archivists they educate is a greater understanding of, and cooperation between, the history-related professions. By virtue of familiarity with many history-related professions, students of these programs will become more aware of common concerns. Hence, they will possess greater potential to marshal public support for the management of historical resources. This desire for broad-based public support has been called for by the archival profession, and by other allied professions, time and time again.⁸ Fostering the cooperative perspective is best accomplished through the education of young professionals entering these fields and by encouraging this perspective throughout their

careers. Promoting cooperation among the history-related professions for the betterment of preserving and presenting history is an important improvement public history education can offer the archival profession.

Another way public history programs can aid archival education lies in their ability to educate future practitioners with a public service orientation toward their work. This orientation is largely ignored in graduate academic history programs. But the literature of the public history field is filled with case studies that address the issues of identifying and serving audiences.⁹ There is great potential for archivists to learn from public history about serving their constituencies.

Public historians promote the use of history within categories defined by the mandates of their employing institutions. Most mandates relate to serving a particular constituency: citizens and administrators of municipalities, counties, states, and nations; or perhaps members of universities, churches, corporations, hospitals, and other social institutions. In other words, public historians are keenly aware that the history they pursue is chosen by the public they serve.¹⁰ Hence their educational programs focus not just on teaching how to use history but on who is using history. Public historians have made public service the cornerstone of their mission.

⁷For articles regarding the development of pioneering public history programs, see Robert Kelley, "Public History: Its Origins, Nature, and Prospects," *Public Historian* 1 (Fall 1978): 16–28, and Peter N. Stearns and Joel A. Tarr, "Applied History: A New-Old Departure," *History Teacher* 14 (August 1981): 517–31.

⁸*Planning for the Archival Profession: A Report of the SAA Task Force on Goals and Priorities* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1986).

⁹Examples are William J. Morison, "Creating A Local Records and Community Archival Center: The Case of the University of Louisville," *Public Historian* 1 (Summer 1979): 23–28; Lee F. Pendergrass, "Taking History to the Public: The Kansas Historian-in-Residence Program," *Public Historian* 4 (Winter 1982): 73–87; Richard Jensen, "Interview: The Accomplishments of the Newberry Library Family and Community History Programs," *Public Historian* 5 (Fall 1983): 49–62; Barry Mackintosh, "The National Park Service Moves into Historical Interpretation," *Public Historian* 9 (Spring 1987): 51–64; and Janice L. Reiff and Susan E. Hirsch, "Pullman and Its Public: Image and Aim in Making and Interpreting History," *Public Historian* 11 (Fall 1989): 99–112.

¹⁰Kelley, "Public History: Its Origins," 18. See also G. Wesley Johnson, "Editor's Preface," *Public Historian* 1 (Fall 1978): 4–10.

Archivists and Public History Programs

The reluctance of archivists to articulate a pedagogy of public service has caused them to turn to library science training to learn about an important aspect of their own work. Archivists are beginning to make inroads toward adapting library science training to the archival profession. For example, among the most comprehensive graduate archival education programs are those located at the schools of library and information science of the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Maryland. However, one of the problems encountered by archivists has been convincing library program administrators to address the needs of more than just one type of professional—the librarian—but to include the archivist as well. The better public history program directors already are concerned with educating many types of professionals. They see the archival profession as a major history-related profession in which their students can become professionals. In addition to library science, public history programs can provide archivists with formal training in public service techniques.

The academic history component of any sound public history program teaches its students the art and craft of being historians. Through graduate reading and research seminars, the public history programs allow students to pursue their scholarly interests. Students become skilled in historical research methodology, historiography, and public speaking. They gain areas of subject expertise, as well as general historical competence.

The best public history programs set out to do the following:

1. Introduce students to the theoretical aspects of the wide variety of history-related professions.
2. Teach the importance of a public service orientation.
3. Explore the issues of the fields in-

cluded in the program, train students in the basic technical skills, and arrange for their first field experiences.

4. Train students in historical research and writing.

These program goals define basic educational principles that the archival profession as a whole should provide for future practitioners.

However, the archival profession has given little recognition to the potential of public history programs and, in some instances, has even created adversarial relationships. Public history program directors clearly believe their programs can provide students with improved training—and subsequently improved employability—in the history professions. It appears the archival profession does not understand their efforts. As recently as 1988, Allan Kovan wrote that “archivists have been uninformed about public history and public history programs,” citing that when he approached a program committee of the Midwest Archives Conference in 1985 about proposing a session on public history he found “the program committee did not know to what the term ‘public history’ referred.”¹¹

The Problems Facing Archival Education in Public History Programs

One of the underlying problems and points of suspicion wedged between public history programs and the archival profession is concern about the motives for creating the multitudes of public history programs that exist today. Archivists are right to be concerned. This issue is more than a matter of varying quality among programs. Public historians state that all history departments should have a public history curriculum to prepare their students for more than just the

¹¹Allan Kovan, “Helping Friends: Archives Training for Public Historians,” *American Archivist* 51 (Summer 1988): 314.

academy.¹² But it has been suggested forcefully that many programs are created only in an attempt to justify the current level of faculty in a history department.¹³ Without going through a lengthy reexamination of the arguments put forth on this topic, I believe it is safe to surmise that many programs that sprang up overnight during the 1980s do not adequately prepare graduates who want to pursue history-related careers.

Archivists also may criticize public history programs for dividing their instruction among too many fields. In the worst of situations, graduates learn very little about the multitude of history-related fields because the graduate's time is spread too thinly. The best programs communicate a meaningful understanding of several fields so graduates can become effective managers of historical resources in a wide variety of institutional and professional settings. However, recent efforts by the archival profession work toward expanding and intensifying the instruction provided in the archival curricula, not weakening it by commingling with instruction from other fields. The two-course archival sequence still found in many public history education programs may be appropriate for introducing students to the archival profession and the archivist's work, but it is hardly appropriate for training professional archivists.

There is also a noticeable lack of archivists teaching archival courses and devel-

oping archival components in public history programs. In the best programs, individual archivists double as adjunct professors teaching archival courses. But including archivists in a team of allied professionals, developing the overall curricula, creating and managing the goals of the program, locating meaningful institutional settings for student practicums, and assisting in placing graduates is a goal far from being realized. To date, archivists simply have not been an integral part of public historical training, yet archival management careers are among the most promising career paths held out by program directors.¹⁴

The strong notion exists among archivists that public historians, as H. G. Jones so succinctly put it, have "reinvented the wheel."¹⁵ Many public historians claim to have "created" the field of public history. Their claim is troublesome because it denies the historical existence and mission of the archival profession in the United States. Archivists' assertions about public history programs "shoving their way into established areas of expertise"¹⁶ without consulting the experts is valid in light of public historians' inaccurate perspective. This misunderstanding pervades much of the public history literature and must be revised to acknowledge the archival profession's time-honored experience in managing and promoting awareness of historical resources.

Given all the potential that public history programs hold for graduate archival education, the aforementioned schisms do ex-

¹²Otis L. Graham, Jr., "Editor's Corner," *Public Historian* 12 (Spring 1990): 5-6.

¹³It has also been suggested to me that the surplus graduate history programs unable to place their students in teaching positions were reluctant to abandon the prestige of graduate training. Therefore, master's programs in public history were created.

See articles by David Clary, "Trouble Is My Business: A Private View of 'Public' History," *American Archivist* 44 (Spring 1981): 105-12; Cox, "Archivists and Public Historians," 29-45; and Bruce Fraser, "A Methodology Based on Limits: The State Humanities Councils and Public History," *Newsletter of the National Council on Public History* 2 (Summer-Fall 1984): 3.

¹⁴"Public historians have formed their discipline with little effort to seek cooperation from the affected professions like archives," Cox, "Archivists and Public Historians," 32.

¹⁵H. G. Jones, "The Pink Elephant Revisited," *American Archivist* 43 (Fall 1980): 480.

¹⁶Kovan, "Helping Friends," 314. See also Cox, "Archivists and Public Historians," 31, where Cox states "the public history field . . . has arisen . . . with little regard for or understanding of the many professions it presumes to include within its own parameters."

ist. By and large, these schisms are the products of uncoordinated and unsustained interaction.¹⁷ Archivists and public historians must interact in more meaningful forums. The archivists' goals should be to remove misconceptions about both professions and, more explicitly, to educate public history program directors about the mission of the archival profession, as well as about what it needs from graduate-level archival education. Once this meaningful and sustained interaction has been achieved, much of the basis for skepticism between archivists and public historians will be removed.

A Rapprochement Between Archives and Public History

Archivists have initiated a rapprochement with the public history community. Bruce Dearstyne of the New York State Archives guest-edited the Summer 1986 issue of the *Public Historian*, which was dedicated to archives; his editorship represented a significant step toward better understanding. The national journal of public historians has tried to continue this initiative through its "Pioneers of Public History" section found in many issues. This section features articles examining notable late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century public historians and explores their significant achievements as managers of the historical record. However, archivists have not been the subject of any of these articles. Dearstyne initiated a process for public historians whereby they can improve their historical perspective of the origins and evolution of today's archivists and other history-related professions.

The archivists' rapprochement sorely needs a reply from public historians. Their

reply can come from their own public history conferences, or perhaps from joint conferences. The archival journal equivalent of the 1986 summer issue of *The Public Historian* could also play a significant role from the public historians' perspective, expressing their concerns, desires, problems, and misconceptions regarding the archival profession and graduate archival education. Even providing archival internships for public history students is a good first step toward promoting interaction. These activities will work toward preparing future generations of professionals in the history-related professions to explore more vigorously some joint means of improving the identification, public awareness, and utility of historical resources.

Apart from the problems stemming from the lack of formal channels for communication and interaction, the problems of "diluted instruction" and the lack of full-time, professional faculty focus more directly on the public history curriculum. It should be safe to assume that if a professional archivist becomes a full-time member of a program's faculty, then the archival curricula will be expanded and improved. When archivists and other allied professionals are part of the program as full-time faculty members, the entire public history program can evolve accordingly and will be in a better position to address the needs of graduate-level education for entry into the archival profession.

This is a very tall order—creating more full-time faculty positions and convincing public history program directors that these faculty members should come from the field of practitioners who have toiled diligently to improve the educational standards of their respective professions. Yet, full-time archival educators are needed desperately. In a recent article, Paul Conway calculated the ratio of library science faculty to American Library Association members and applied that ratio to the archival profession. Conway found that a total of thirty full-time

¹⁷"There seems to have been little serious discussion between the various professional associations about standards and principles," Cox, "Archivists and Public Historians," 32.

professional faculty members in archival administration, expanding from the current number of seven, can be supported in a variety of educational venues.¹⁸ Most likely, public history will be among these venues.

Because of their isolation from allied professionals and their unwillingness to bring these professionals into the public history program setting, the weaker public history programs will eventually fall by the wayside.¹⁹ The guidelines for program development created by the American Association of State and Local History and the National Council on Public History can aid archivists in determining which public history programs have a solid curricular base and a progressive vision regarding the education of history-related professionals. Both archivists and public historians must cooperate with each other if the weak and isolated programs are to become a thing of the past.

The Key Concepts of Public History Education

A more fully developed public history program, complete with a professional faculty, should focus on three key concepts, which should become inherent in their educational mission:

1. Address and encourage the commonalities regarding the education and training of members in the history-related fields.
2. Respect each field for the distinct profession that it is.
3. Acknowledge the high degree of unique education and training that each requires to maintain itself as a profession.

Public history educators have embraced the first point but have completely ignored the other two. They have not discussed how to

integrate public history education with the stated educational needs of the allied professions, particularly the archival profession.²⁰ If public history programs fail to create a curriculum sensitive to all three concepts, the results will be damaging to the public history movement, the individual allied professions, the students who will inherit the future of these professions, and the constituencies they serve.

To integrate the key concepts into public history education and to implement them throughout the curriculum, programs must provide an introduction to the broad aspects and issues of public history, provide a transition whereby students can become familiar with the concepts and principles of several fields, and end with specific education and training relating to one field. The first step in this evolution will be to decide which fields will be taught from the public history rubric. Certainly any program that claims to prepare its students in all the fields that public history has placed in its domain will fall short of treating any of them adequately.²¹

It is possible for the history-related fields to be grouped together to ensure a public history education that is broad in scope yet specific in career preparation. Some of the fields may be grouped as follows: historical editing/publishing/media; government/public policy; cultural resource management/historic site management/historic preservation; and archives and manuscripts administration/museum administration. Although the fields within these groups have many similar interests, these groupings may,

²⁰See the Summer 1987 issue of the *Public Historian*, entitled "The Field of Public History: Planning the Curriculum." Many articles address integrating public history education into the traditional history curricula. None addresses relations between public history programs and the long-established history-related professions.

²¹Noel J. Stowe, "Developing A Public History Curriculum Beyond the 1980s: Challenges and Foresight," *Public Historian* 9 (Summer 1987): 24-25.

¹⁸Conway, "Archival Education," 260.

¹⁹McCrank, "Public Historians in the Information Professions," 8.

of course, need serious revision and are mere suggestions at this point. Archivists will benefit from creating interfield groupings that relate closely to collecting, preserving, and providing access to historical collections. Narrowing the fields treated in a public history program is the single most efficient way to ensure that education relating to specific fields will not be lost in the ocean of diverse course offerings.

All public history programs should provide a basic introduction to the discipline of public history through a single seminar course. Generally, archivists have not recognized the merits of such a course in archival training. The introductory course would enable the student to place archival endeavors within the larger scheme of managing historical resources as well as understanding archives' specific role in society. It would teach students the value of interacting with others in the history-related professions and would focus their attention on public service, which is ultimately the reason that all archives exist. It is time for archivists to shape introductory public history courses to aid archives students in acquiring a firm educational background.

The next step in the public history curriculum would begin introducing the students to common principles and issues in several fields. As previously suggested, closely related fields under the public history umbrella can be examined jointly at this level of instruction. Broad issues common to each group—such as collecting, access, security, legal issues, preservation, and historical interpretation and outreach—can be examined in an interrelated, interdisciplinary fashion. Although some may see this step as blurring the professions, the intent is to explore the interrelatedness of the various fields and expose students to a variety of perspectives. Students then would decide which field to pursue with more specific education and training.

Once students have gone through the earlier stages they would select a specific

curricular track in the public history program to pursue more specific education and training relating to the field of their choice. These tracks would be closely aligned with the individual professions the program addresses. The attempt here is to carry the previous interdisciplinary perspective into the educational process which respects the uniqueness of the individual profession. At this level, a very specific archival curriculum would be developed.

Precise groups of courses could be developed within the archival track. James O'Toole has suggested many useful clusters of archival curriculum, in which certain courses would be required from each cluster and others would remain electives. These clusters are theory and practice, archival functions, institutions and repositories, records format, management functions, and the practicum cluster.²² The "cluster" concept is a useful tool to categorize the functions and concepts in the archival profession, to ensure an appropriate level of investigation and study in required areas, and to make them pedagogically manageable. It also serves well in identifying a core curriculum necessary to produce well educated archivists.

Public history programs can effectively prepare prospective archivists for entry into the field while at the same time training other students in the myriad professions included under the rubric of public history. Public historians themselves have worked hard during the last decade to construct their paradigm of public history education. Indeed, they must continue to do what they do best—finding ways to encourage the interrelatedness of the allied professions. But major revisions must take place in the structure of public history programs to integrate, yet respect, the unique domain of

²²James O'Toole, "Curriculum Development in Archival Education: A Proposal," *American Archivist* 53 (Summer 1990): 460–66.

each history-related field. Archivists must play a more significant role in this paradigm as full-time faculty members teaching archival courses, expanding the curriculum, and directing the overall program. Clearly, the burden is on the archival profession to push public history programs into becoming a better education for archivists.

Archivists should accept and recognize the legitimate potential that public history programs possess as a forum for education

in history-related fields, including archives. The archival profession can ill-afford to forgo such an opportunity for improving the professional education of its ranks—public history programs are a large, relatively untapped opportunity. If the archival profession will not actively participate in the public history paradigm, then development of archival curricula in this venue will be done by public historians, without archivists.