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ABSTRACT

This report presents recommendations reflecting ideals essential to the study of history. Its purpose is to assist college and university history faculties in their efforts to offer students a coherent curriculum and to strengthen their claims for a central place for history in their institutions' programs. A brief summary of existing conditions and practices sets the context for the recommendations, which in turn prompt strategic questions for history faculties to address as they lay plans for the future. While focusing on the history major, the report also considers the larger role that history plays in college curricula and in the lives of those pursuing studies in other fields, suggesting ways to enhance the contribution of history to the education of all students. Because it recognizes that the fate of history in colleges and universities is inseparable from its well-being in elementary and secondary schools, it proposes measures to be taken in common with those who teach history there. The report is addressed to a number of audiences including: (1) individual historians; (2) history faculties in colleges and universities; (3) secondary and elementary school teachers and curriculum planners; (4) students majoring in history; (5) The American Historical Association; (6) college and university administrators; (7) The Association of American Colleges; and (8) the higher education community. (EH)

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HISTORY MAJOR

American His[illegible]on Task Force
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PREFACE

This report was completed in cooperation with a national review of arts and sciences majors initiated by the Association of American Colleges (AAC) as part of its continuing commitment to advance and strengthen undergraduate liberal learning. The American Historical Association (AHA) was one of twelve learned societies contributing to this review. Each participating learned society convened a task force charged to address a common set of questions about purposes and practices in liberal arts majors; individual task forces further explored issues important in their particular fields.

In 1991, the Association of American Colleges will publish a single-volume edition of all twelve learned society reports with a companion volume containing a separate report on *Liberal Learning and Arts and Sciences Majors*. Inquiries about these two publications may be sent to Reports on the Arts and Sciences Major, Box R, Association of American Colleges, 1818 R Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20009. For additional copies of the history report only, contact the AHA Publication Sales Department, 400 A Street SE, Washington, D.C. 20003-3889.

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At the request of the AHA, the following served as readers of this report and offered helpful comments: Albert Camarillo, Stanford University; Nadine I. Hata, El Camino Community College District; and Clara Sue Kidwell, University of California, Berkeley. Written comments on earlier drafts were also provided by J. Sherman Barker, the Hotchkiss School; Peter Filene, Miles Fletcher, Lloyd Kramer, and Don Reid, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; David Kyvig, University of Akron; Marilyn Rubchak, Valparaiso

University; and James J. Ward, Cedar Crest College. Joanne Brown, Drake University, provided editorial assistance. James B. Gardner, Deputy Executive Director of the American Historical Association, served as liaison with the AHA. Carol Schneider, executive vice-president of the Association of American Colleges, provided many helpful suggestions.

A CALL *to* HISTORIANS

Historians of the 1990s will carry the past into the twenty-first century. Now is the time for us to rethink our purposes and practices, to seek and accept new commitments, to give the past a vigorous future.

We face a formidable challenge, for contemporary society, with its emphasis on new products and new fashions, ignores the past or reduces it to banalities for popular consumption or political manipulation. The mass media portray disconnected historical figures and disjointed events, providing few opportunities for explication and analysis.

Schools, colleges, and universities, too, have devalued the past by compromising the place of history in their curricula. Moreover, the history taught in classrooms and presented in books and articles too often lacks energy and imagination. As a consequence, many students not only fail to gain a sense of history, they come to dislike it.

As educational institutions share responsibility for devaluing the past, so also do they have it in their power to restore its value by educating those in their charge to think historically and to use knowledge and understanding of the past to challenge the present and the future. This report is a call to action.

History is an encompassing discipline. Its essence is in the connectedness of historical events and human experiences. By examining the causes, contexts, and chronologies of events, one gains an understanding of the nature of continuity and change in human experiences. Contemporary issues, ideas, and relationships take on new meaning when they are explored from historical perspectives.

History therefore plays an integrative role in the quest for liberal learning and, accordingly, in a college's offerings. While acknowledging that our discipline does not have all the

answers and that vigorous and long-standing disagreements exist among us, we nonetheless share the conviction that knowledge, abilities, and perspectives gained through the study of history are applicable also in other disciplines. We are compelled, therefore, to claim a central place for the study of history in our institutions' programs.

The time is right for us to make such a claim. Many in the general public can be counted upon to support it, for they appreciate the importance of historical knowledge and display considerable interest in the past. They read books on historical topics and figures, visit historical museums, watch documentary films, and are active in local historical societies and projects. Many of them observe the status of history in schools and colleges and wonder why it does not enjoy more respect. Although they might concede that some of their fellow citizens regard history as irrelevant to contemporary life, they care about the place of history in the curricula of schools and colleges. They want to see its place strengthened and its influence enlarged.

This report presents recommendations reflecting ideals essential to the study of history. Its purpose is to assist college and university history faculties in their efforts to offer students a coherent curriculum and to strengthen their claims for a central place for history in their institutions' programs. A brief summary of existing conditions and practices sets the context for the recommendations, and the recommendations in turn prompt strategic questions for history faculties to address as we lay plans for the future.

While focusing on the history major, the report also considers the larger role that history plays in college curricula and in the lives of those pursuing studies in other fields, suggesting ways to enhance the contribution of history to the education of all students. Because it recognizes that the fate of history in colleges and universities is inseparable from its well-being in elementary and secondary schools, it proposes measures to be taken in common with those who teach history there.

The report is addressed to a number of audiences, with specific purposes:

- Individual historians, to help all of us recognize that we must meet our responsibilities to strengthen the history major and improve the quality of history education.
- History faculties in colleges and universities—including those in two-year colleges, who provide the introductory courses for many students pursuing history majors later and who often feel a profound sense of isolation—to provide reasons for revising our programs and practices.
- Secondary and elementary schoolteachers and curriculum planners, to provide support for casting history in a central curricular role and coordinating history curricula between schools and colleges.
- Students majoring in history, to enable them to participate constructively in rethinking the major in their institutions.
- The American Historical Association, to prompt it to increase its support for efforts to improve the teaching of history at all educational levels.
- College and university administrators, to suggest guidelines for assessing the design and quality of history majors in their institutions and to strengthen the case for providing resources essential to sound programs.
- The Association of American Colleges, to contribute to the larger effort to help colleges and universities strengthen all liberal arts majors.
- The higher education community, to affirm the centrality of history as a liberal discipline with potential for enriching students' lives and to demonstrate the commitment of historians to strengthening history's role in colleges and universities.

HISTORY *and* LIBERAL LEARNING

The study of history incorporates the essential elements of liberal learning, namely, acquisition of knowledge and understanding, cultivation of perspective, and development of communication and critical-thinking skills; it reflects concern for human values and appreciation of contexts and traditions.

History, in Carl Becker's phrase, is the "memory of things said and done." Establishing historical memory requires reconstructing human actions and events, ordered chronologically or topically. This reconstruction depends upon the acquisition of knowledge that is both broad and deep, incorporating facts, principles, theories, ideas, practices, and methods. Historical inquiry in pursuit of knowledge goes beyond explanations of what happened and how, to investigation of the "why" from multiple perspectives. Students of history analyze written, oral, visual, and material evidence. Their analyses yield generalizations and interpretations, properly qualified and placed in contexts that reveal the process of change over time. Understanding is the extension of knowledge. Analysis and synthesis contribute to historical understanding and lead to judgments and interpretations. As one's understanding deepens, one moves from the concrete to the abstract, from particular issues or events to well-reasoned generalizations. Historical understanding is enhanced further by connecting it with studies in other liberal disciplines—the natural sciences as well as the humanities and social sciences.

An essential ingredient in knowledge and understanding is perspective, cultivated through sensitivity to cultural and geographical differences and awareness of conflicting interpretations of the same occurrences. Perspective is accompanied by a sense of sequence, that is, of the chronological ordering of events, and a sense of simultaneity—of understanding relationships of diverse events at a given moment.

Studying history as a discipline requires one to engage one's mind with the facts, ideas, and interpretations conveyed or suggested by historical evidence; to give contexts to discrete pieces of evidence; and to devise plausible explanations and judgments based on the evidence. Such engagement compels one to sift, sort, and arrange what one sees in ways that help one make sense of it. The discipline of history equips one to extend facts, ideas, and interpretations into new realms. One must weigh the validity of arguments, assess the soundness of historical judgments, and otherwise practice the art of critical thinking characteristic of discerning minds.

Engagement with evidence—written texts as well as such things as photographs, films, audio- and videotapes, and artifacts—does not end there. Typically, those who examine evidence do not know what they think about it until they see what it leads them to say. In other words, written and oral discourse is essential in gaining historical insights and forming interpretations and conclusions.

In coming to know the past, one becomes aware of contrasts between peoples of different times and places and within one's own time and place. These contrasts reflect differing value systems translated into action. Similarly, one becomes sensitive to the artistic interests and expressions of various peoples, demonstrated through their efforts to create and cultivate beauty in forms that help to define them as a people. In a different vein, for centuries, but at an accelerated pace in recent decades, science and technology have played important roles in the story of humankind. Through appreciation of the aesthetic, scientific, and technological forces of the past, one gains a fuller understanding of the complexity of human history.

Through engagement with the past in a well-designed major, students come to understand and appreciate how historians gather and weigh evidence, shape and test hypotheses, and advance conclusions. They recognize the continuing need to rethink the past, reinterpreting it in the light of new evidence and new concerns and using new tools of analysis and inter-

pretation. If rethinking history is a continuing theme in undergraduate studies, as it should be, students will carry their abilities to inquire, analyze, and interpret into their studies in other fields and into all aspects of their lives and work. They will be equipped to approach knowledgeably, sensitively, and critically whatever careers they choose.

In sum, history is at the heart of liberal learning, as it equips students to:

- Participate knowledgeably in the affairs of the world around them, drawing upon understandings shaped through reading, writing, discussions, and lectures concerning the past.
- See themselves and their society from different times and places, displaying a sense of informed perspective and a mature view of human nature.
- Read and think critically, write and speak clearly and persuasively, and conduct research effectively.
- Exhibit sensitivities to human values in their own and other cultural traditions, and, in turn, establish values of their own.
- Appreciate their natural and cultural environments.
- Respect scientific and technological developments and recognize their impact on humankind.
- Understand the connections between history and life.

It cannot be presumed that all of the purposes for studying history outlined here will be clear to students in college classrooms, particularly to beginning students. History faculties strengthen course offerings and majors by engaging their students in discussions concerning these purposes and leading them to understand how the content and structure of the courses and majors they pursue relate to them.

EXISTING CONDITIONS *and* PRACTICES

A sampling of the policies and practices of history faculties has led the task force to conclude that the design and requirements of history majors in colleges and universities differ on many points. The most notable points of difference include: the purposes of the major, the number of hours or courses required for a degree. specific courses required and the sequence (if any) in which they are to be taken, the balance of lower- and upper-division courses, the fields included, and the concern, or lack of it, for historical method and historiography.

The programs the task force examined reflect the variety of institutions in which they are offered. Even among institutions of a given type—liberal arts colleges, for example, or major research universities—policies and practices vary widely. Majors in history generally seem to be determined by the mission and traditions of each institution; the size, special interests, and competencies of the faculties offering them; and the demands of students. The majors also reflect the convictions, whims, and prejudices of those who establish and maintain them and, in many instances, retrenchments or reductions in resources beyond the faculty's control. A tacit purpose of this report is to provide a basis for validating a history faculty's requests for support for strengthening its offerings.

We recognize that the history majors in some institutions are very good, but we also believe that they are not as sound in many as they must be if they are to meet the challenges facing the faculties that offer them. The recommendations that follow reflect our judgment that most history programs would benefit from a thorough review of requirements, offerings, and practices, and that no institution offers a major that should be regarded as sacred. Each recommendation addresses specific aspects of the major that the task force believes should be the subject of concern in history faculties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **The content of the history major should be consistent with the purposes of studying history, and it should include these specific components:**

   - ***a strong foundation course (which may be waived for those with extraordinarily strong backgrounds in history);***
   - ***a course expressly designed to acquaint students with the diversity of the global setting in which they live;***
   - ***a course in historical methods;***
   - ***a research seminar with a writing requirement;***
   - ***an integrating or synthesizing course.***

History, in contrast to many other fields of study, is a discipline in which there is no standard content, no prescribed sequence of courses. The coherence of a history major therefore depends upon the success that students and teachers, working together, achieve in developing clear organizing principles for their work. Each recommended component of the major contributes to the development of such principles.

A history major should include a well-designed foundation course, ideally taught in small classes with diverse methods, to establish the bases for helping students understand the historian's approach to the past. This course—whether in American history, world history, or Western civilization—should use a syllabus with principles and practices agreed upon by all who teach it, and, if possible, by the entire department. Building on the precollegiate experiences of the entering college students, the foundation course should eschew the "one-damn-fact-after-another" approach to history, centering rather

on historiographical or thematic topics. The problems pursued should be amenable to essay-writing requirements. Essay exams, rather than multiple-choice questions, should be required in these courses throughout the term.

The diversity of American society and rapidly evolving global interdependence compel history faculties to move their students beyond the history of the United States and Western civilization and engage them in the study of other cultures. As a matter of highest priority, the course offerings in every field must address this diversity, giving open and honest attention to questions of race, gender, class, ethnicity, and worldwide interdependence.

It is not enough, of course, simply to establish separate courses to achieve diversity or topical completeness in the major. Subjects that merit treatment in separate, specialized courses should be integrated into more comprehensive courses, as well. Similarly, if a particular approach to history is warranted in a separate course, that approach should also be incorporated into the more general courses.

Instruction in historical methods and historiography is at the heart of efforts to develop organizing principles for a major. As the past grows larger and more formidable, more and more of its content lies beyond the reach of even the most dedicated and competent historians. No one will ever know more than just a slice of the past, and only a slice of that slice can be known during a student's college years. History faculties are therefore obliged to equip their students to go beyond the content treated in their courses by introducing them to historical methods and historiography, enabling them to understand the value and limitations of various kinds of historical writing.

Consideration of conflicting historical interpretations provides a natural starting point for studying historians' methods. (For examples of controversies that might be examined, see the AHR Forum on "The Old History and the New," *American Historical Review*, June 1989, pp. 654–698, and

"A Round Table: What Has Changed and Not Changed in American Historical Practice?" *The Journal of American History*, September 1989, pp. 393–474.) It may also be useful to explore with students the evolution of history as an academic discipline. This can be done by tracing it from the days, more than a century ago, when it was introduced in colleges and universities as a "scientific" field of study, or by examining an idea that has been at the center of many debates over the nature and purpose of studying history, such as historicism.

While offering specific courses devoted exclusively to the study of historical method, history faculties should insist that all courses include instruction in historical method and give attention to historiographical questions, for developing the habit of an inquiring mind requires the habit of maintaining an open mind and, legitimately, of accepting the tentativeness of historical explanations and the necessity for ongoing revisions—the essence of the historian's craft.

The goal of the senior seminar in a history major should be to "turn students loose" on a research project culminating in a senior essay of some distinction. All history majors, not just honors students, should be required to take the senior seminar.

The other required senior course—a synthesizing or integrating or reflective or capstone course—has a contrasting purpose: to give students the opportunity to seek new insights by drawing together what they have learned in earlier experiences. In such a course, typically built around a broad theme, students are challenged to relate what they have learned in history to their studies in other fields. This course, reaching all the way back to the foundation courses, demonstrating sensitivity to global concerns, applying historical methods, and using writing skills that are given their finishing touches in the senior seminar, holds promise of being the most exciting one in the entire major.

A history major, then, is more than a string of courses covering specified time periods, geographic areas, or topical fields designed simply to transmit knowledge. It is more than a set of

requirements for a degree. A sound major is built on the commitment of faculty members to helping students understand more fully the purposes, principles, and methodologies involved in the study of history, and grasp essential particulars and universals of societies past and present. By actively engaging students with the content of their courses and with each other, it also explores questions of judgment and interpretation, of good and bad, of right and wrong, leading to a mature view of humankind.

The size and areas of competence of the faculty offering the major obviously affect the major's content. Small institutions, with faculties of fewer than seven or eight, probably find it impossible to "cover" all of the standard fields in which their larger counterparts offer specializations. Such faculties have several options. One is to capitalize on their strengths by concentrating their offerings in their fields of competence. In these offerings, the faculty stresses the development of research and writing skills that enable students to move knowledgeably by independent study into the fields that are necessarily left uncovered by the faculty. This cannot typically be done in large classes, but it can be done in colloquia that have it as a specific purpose accomplished through directed reading and writing assignments.

Another option is to devote resources to the continual retraining of the faculty, enabling them through released time and support for advanced study to move beyond the fields in which they have concentrated their studies into new ones that serve local needs. While this risks extending the faculty too far, leading to superficial treatment of fields in which it lacks expertise, it enables it to offer more comprehensive programs. It also raises important questions, however, concerning the effects of such retraining over a long career. The effects will be more beneficial if the retraining is elected by the faculty member rather than imposed by the institution and if it is not expected to happen repeatedly.

Regardless of the size of the faculty, every care should be taken to ensure that the student-faculty "fit" is productive. A

small department risks the danger of creating too close a discipleship, and departments of all sizes face the possibility of encouraging anonymity and overspecialized work.

2. The structure and requirements of the history major should reflect the faculty's understanding of the purposes of studying history.

The structure and requirements of a history major should demonstrate, first of all, a faculty's awareness of its ideals and its limits. The major should concentrate its offerings in areas that make the most of the faculty's strengths. Although the major may of necessity neglect certain areas, the faculty can assist students in developing skills they need for independent study in these areas. If a history faculty cannot influence its college to incorporate into its general education or distribution requirements what it regards as essential contributors to a liberal education—or to a professional education, for that matter—it can build these requirements into its own major and its offerings for the nonmajor. In all that it does, a history faculty should recognize that its goal must be a comprehensive, well-balanced major. If it is unable to offer such a major, it must seek resources for doing so.

In designing its major, in addition to considering questions that local circumstances prompt, a history faculty should address the following questions, to which we suggest answers:

a) What are the purposes of the history major?

The purposes are both general and specific. The general purposes are stated implicitly above, in "History and Liberal Learning." In more specific terms, the major prepares students for graduate work in history; for studies in law, business, medicine, and other professions; and for careers demanding the knowledge, understanding, perspective, skills, and sensitivities one gains through studying history. The sound major is designed to accommodate the needs of all.

b) How many hours should be required?

The major should require about one-fourth of the total hours needed to complete a four-year degree (typically thirty to thirty-three semester hours or forty-five to fifty quarter hours, probably not including six hours in foundation surveys). In addition, to acquaint students with other forms of inquiry, it should require another six to twelve carefully selected hours in related humanities or social sciences fields. Indeed, because contemporary historical scholarship draws so heavily upon other disciplines, the undergraduate major is strengthened and enriched through a coherent interdisciplinary approach.

c) What should be the relationships and balance between lower- and upper-division courses?

Because learning in history is not necessarily cumulative and does not need to be chronological, the content of lower- and upper-division courses cannot be prescribed as it can in some disciplines. Nor are there approaches that are appropriate at one level and inappropriate at another. The principal distinction between courses at the various levels of study lies in the sophistication of the knowledge and understanding they reflect and the abilities they require of students enrolled in them.

More than half of the credits toward a history major should be earned in upper-division courses. Typically, the foundation courses, carrying the lowest numbers, are followed by those with greater depth, and then by the senior-level seminars and colloquia that provide for studying specific topics in depth. While a history major rarely requires all students to take specific courses in sequence, it can convey a sense of coherence, and implicitly of sequence, by ensuring that courses at each level make increasingly more rigorous demands.

In some departments, it may be possible to offer a course with two different numbers, with requirements more demand-

ing for history majors and less demanding for nonmajors, who, although not equipped to do more rigorous work, may find the classroom and reading experiences worthwhile. If this is done, however, the distinctive experiences that each student has a right to expect must not be compromised. The same principles apply to undergraduate courses offered for optional graduate credit.

d) Should there be concentrations within the history major?

Fostering depth of knowledge and understanding in one area within the major is desirable. A concentration aimed at developing such depth typically requires at least four courses. Ideally, courses taken in other disciplines should also relate to the concentration. At the same time, to foster breadth of knowledge and understanding there should be limits to the concentrations, with no more than half of the courses credited toward the major taken in a single field.

Concentrations within history majors may be organized by theme, period, geographical region, or some combination of these options. Whatever the integrating element, it should be clearly understood by both students and teachers. Since the concentration is more likely to be designed by students and their advisors than those teaching the courses in which they enroll, faculty members should seek to discover how their courses relate to each student's particular concentration.

e) What are the implications of offering an honors option for history majors?

A history faculty offering an honors option must determine such things as admission requirements, the nature and extent of special courses offered to honors students, mentoring relationships, thesis or major paper requirements, and comprehensive exams.

f) What matters most in the design and offering of a major?

How the courses in a major are taught is more important than its stated requirements. The best-designed history major, in other words, is of little value if those who teach the courses in it fail to bring it to life. It is of even less value if the way its courses are taught reflects a lack of commitment to excellence in teaching by the faculty offering it. Striking a new balance between commitments to teaching and the demands of research may be necessary in some institutions. Conversely, of course, students suffer if all of a faculty member's time and energies are devoted to teaching at the expense of scholarly work.

Assuming excellent teaching, here are some additional points to be considered:

- Historians and students of history find meaning in the past through discovering the connectedness of things. The most effective majors are those that equip students to discover connections, thereby both satisfying and stimulating the student's curiosity. Discovery of connections may be the most important element in the shaping of a coherent major for each student.

- The search for connectedness does not begin and end with history courses. Ideally, it continues across the disciplines in the programs of study of all students. A purpose of history courses is to help them learn how to search for it.

- The courses in the major, while not necessarily taken in sequence, should cultivate in students a sense of historical chronology, perhaps by consciously relating each course in the major to others and by concentrating on chronology within each course.

- Every course should require students to engage in research and writing at a level appropriate to the course's place in the major.

- Some of the courses in the major should provide special opportunities for oral presentations that go beyond classroom discussion.

- The requirements of the major must be flexible enough to allow faculties to address specific student interests. This is particularly true as adult students increasingly populate college classrooms. Acknowledging this, however, and recognizing that adult students enrolling in college after years away from classroom experiences may require special assistance in developing study practices, the task force asserts that significant distinctions should not be drawn between the programs of these students and the ones who have traditionally pursued undergraduate studies.

- The core requirements for the history major should be satisfied by all students, including those who might be pursuing a separate track (such as public or applied history).

The history major should have coherence, integrity, rigor, focus, and imagination. Coherence is evident in majors that fit together conceptually and practically. A major with integrity is one with principles and practices that cannot be compromised. Testimony to rigor lies in the significance of the demands the major places on those who offer it as well as those who pursue it. A major with a focus is one with a specific, readily defined purpose. Imagination in a major means that it is designed to capture images of the past, to make new images of the past, to play with the past as well as to work with it.

g) What are the implications of the structure of the major for the students pursuing it?

Just as the major offered to all students must be carefully designed, so also must be each student's course of study. Careful advising should clarify the requirements of the major and

lead to an understanding of the rationale for the sequence of courses, both within and beyond the major, in which each student will enroll.

3. **The pedagogical methods and instructional materials used to accomplish the purposes of the major should be appropriate to those purposes.**

These issues, among others, must be addressed:

a) Who should teach the foundation courses?

The purposes of foundation courses are to excite as well as to inform, to engage the minds and imaginations of those who may be indifferent to history or even antagonistic to it. It takes an excellent teacher to accomplish these purposes. Obviously, then, only the best teachers should teach foundation courses. If they happen to be senior professors in a department, who better to teach them? If teaching these courses falls to graduate students and part-time faculty, some of whom may be excellent teachers, care should be taken that high standards are always observed.

b) How should the organizing principle of a course be conveyed?

Students need to know why the period under study was framed as it was, why the theme of a course makes sense, why certain content is included and other not, why the scope of the coverage is as broad or as narrow as it is. The organizing principle will dictate perhaps the most important decisions in developing a course, those that determine how the content is selected to fit into the instructional time available for treating it.

c) How can classroom time be utilized most effectively?

So vast a subject as this defies a brief answer, but a summary response is possible. Lectures may appear to be efficient, but they do not necessarily accomplish what we like to think they do. Indeed, they are efficient only in the sense that they enable a

teacher to deal handily with large numbers of students at the same time. Lectures create the impression that the voice of authority is there to dispense the unchallenged truth. Unless there is time for interaction between teacher and student and among students and, particularly in smaller classes, opportunity for conversations that continue beyond the classroom, lectures simply encourage passivity and contribute little to learning. Besides, listening to one voice, uninterrupted for stretches of fifty minutes and longer, too often prompts one-word critiques by students: "boring." The use of audio and visual materials may serve good purposes provided they are seen as genuine instructional tools and not simply as ways of breaking the routine.

If lectures must be used to accommodate larger classes, history faculties must balance them with smaller classes that employ other methods of teaching. These may be seminars and colloquia that give students opportunities for oral presentations and discussions based on their research and writing.

d) What are some possible learning opportunities beyond the classroom?

Courses in a history major should include substantial writing requirements related to textual analysis. Starting with the foundation course, students should be required to identify a position in a text and deal with it critically, marshaling the evidence found in the text to support conclusions they present in writing. This will require extensive use of the library. Traditional library resources and new technologies for use in research provide students with experiences that go far beyond their immediate application in history courses. Library research of this nature, along with the requirements of extensive writing, assumes student competence in using computers and word processors. If such competence is lacking, history faculties are obliged to offer opportunities to develop it.

In addition to coupling library activities with writing assignments, the history major can create opportunities for field research, typically as part of guided research projects. Through research in archives and museums and the use of other community resources, students learn that traces of the past are found in a wide variety of forms.

Advising plays an important part in the teaching of history majors, not only in guiding students through program requirements but also in answering questions about related matters, for example, the importance of studying foreign languages and statistics. Central to the advising relationship, however, is the common task of designing a sequence of courses directed toward the achievement of well-conceived goals. Advisors of history majors need also to help students see how the knowledge and skills gained through studying history apply to a wide variety of careers.

e) *What are the principal considerations regarding instructional materials and the history major?*

Textbooks are the old standby, of course, and they may well be essential in some courses. Their use should be limited, however, to reinforcing a framework for the course established by the professor; serving as a handy reference for topics dealt with in class; giving a course continuity and sequence that its in- and out-of-class treatment might not provide; and presenting maps, graphs, tables, and pictures.

Other materials, particularly primary documents, play a vital role, as do monographs, journal articles, book reviews, and maps. Oral histories recorded on tape or film or accurately transcribed, along with photographs, slides, motion pictures, artifacts, and audio- and videotapes serve as good sources for analysis. (A two-hour video compilation, *Image as Artifact*, available from the American Historical Association, shows how film and television may be used effectively.) Drawing upon a variety of resources is as important as using a mix of teaching methods in sustaining interest in history among today's students.

4. **The place of history in the programs of studies of non-majors should be clear and pursued appropriately.**

Students not majoring in history, particularly those in such professional fields as business and engineering, may seem to be only tourists in the foreign country called the past. That does not diminish the value of historical study in such students' academic programs, however, for a grasp of history will be of value to them no matter the careers they pursue. To demonstrate that probable value is an opportunity history faculties should welcome.

Most of what has been said so far about the study of history for the history major is applicable also to the nonmajor. In addition, imaginative history professors find ways to relate the study of the past to specific interests of the nonmajors, enticing them to see relationships between their narrower outlooks and the broader dimensions of the past. The graphic design major, for example, might study the history of advertising in a given period. The engineering student might explore technical matters as contemporary as nuclear power or as traditional as architectural masterpieces of the ages. Students majoring in pharmacy or nursing might explore the history of health care. The business major might study the history of business in America or of international business. For all students, the history of women's experiences and of ethnic and race relations provide contexts for understanding the changing nature of gender roles and issues of race and ethnicity.

5. **History faculties should know and address important concerns regarding the training and retraining of teachers and the condition of history in the schools.**

Their commitment to history compels college history faculties to:

- provide the best possible history courses for prospective teachers;

- teach the courses in exemplary ways, since teachers tend to teach in the manner of their most influential teachers;
- attempt to ensure that prospective teachers major in history rather than education;
- collaborate with the education professors who teach instructional methods courses, seeking to make the purposes of these courses consistent with those offered in history and drawing upon the extensive research into the effectiveness of various instructional approaches.

The following practices all contribute to the general well-being of history as an academic discipline:

- forming alliances with the schools to improve history education;
- through these alliances, determining and publicizing what high school students should learn prior to their enrollment in college;
- inviting history teachers from the schools to participate in departmental colloquia or seminars—always ensuring that relationships that develop are collegial rather than patronizing;
- offering continuing education and in-service opportunities for teachers (possibly including late afternoon courses to suit teachers' schedules), enabling the teachers to remain current with new developments in history;
- serving as guest teachers in the schools on special occasions;
- participating in such activities as local history fairs and National History Day.

Simply showing interest in the work of elementary and high school teachers and students may be the most important contribution college teachers can make to the larger cause of history education. If collaboration is to occur, someone, probably a member of the college or university faculty, must take the initiative, and collaborating institutions must provide incentives for those who participate in the jointly offered activities.

History faculties should also participate in writing state curriculum documents for elementary and secondary school social studies curricula. They must be alert to legislative issues relating to the study of history and to policies implemented by state departments of education because curriculum requirements imposed by legislatures may be treated lightly by state officials responsible for enforcing them.

Teacher certification standards are of special concern to history faculties, for the long-standing inclination to increase requirements for education courses while minimizing the importance of studies in the teaching field always threatens to populate precollegiate history classrooms with people who are not equipped to teach their young charges. Where trends seem to be in the opposite direction at the moment, history faculties should encourage them. They might, for example, support efforts to require that all social studies teachers should minor in history regardless of their social studies specialties.

Should legislatures, responding to efforts to strengthen the place of history in social studies curricula, mandate new history courses or proficiency exams for students, they should also provide support for educating teachers to teach them.

6. The needs and abilities of students should be taken into account in designing and offering a history major.

Most of the needs of students have been addressed in the points made so far. Additionally, though, a history faculty may help its cause by building a sense of community among stu-

dents majoring in history. This might take the form of a history club or an honor society such as Phi Alpha Theta. A student organization might sponsor activities that bring majors together in common endeavors. If interaction outside the classroom contributes to interaction within it, this would serve very good purposes. Along the same lines, special efforts to provide a supportive environment for minorities and nontraditional students should be encouraged.

A further need relates to the value of a history major in careers and professions. History faculties should address this need in advising their students and in their department's publications, showing that undergraduate studies in history lay a solid foundation for careers in business, law, and government. Opportunities for rewarding careers as teachers in elementary and secondary schools are increasing, and students should be encouraged to consider them, too.

Faculties should advise students interested in pursuing advanced studies in history on how to select and gain admission to graduate programs and about career options in college teaching (with prospects for good positions improving), museums, archives, historical societies, publishing firms, historic preservation organizations, and public service.

Because historians are not always well enough informed on career opportunities to be able to give students current information, they should work closely with the college's career planning center. This entails not only directing students to the center for information and advice, but helping the center establish the contacts that will enable it to have the latest information available. Professional associations in history should be prepared to provide career planning centers with timely information.

Our knowledge is meager concerning the cognitive abilities of students of college age that equip them to learn history. The task force urges that research on this topic be undertaken. The findings would contribute much to the rethinking of the history major and the manner in which history courses are taught.

7. **The purpose, structure, and content of the history major should be reviewed regularly, along with the effectiveness of those who teach it and the achievements of students pursuing it.**

The majors offered by history faculties are in fact evaluated regularly by both the faculty and the students they are designed to serve, but typically these evaluations are informal and off-the-record. The faculty is not well-informed about students' judgments, and students are in the dark as to what the faculty members are thinking. Ideally, formal evaluations, addressing mutual concerns of students and faculty, should also occur regularly and for the record.

Evaluation of majors in colleges and universities, often called program review, usually focuses on the purposes, structure, quality, and place of the majors under review—paying attention also, of course, to the resources they require, the demand for them, and their cost. Evaluation also seeks to assess the performance of both teachers and students—the quality of the teaching and the nature and extent of the learning that occurs in college classrooms and beyond. This compels history faculties to identify their criteria for good teaching, to address in specific terms their plans for evaluating the effectiveness of the teaching in their departments, and to measure their students' learning.

Excellent teaching requires, first of all, expertise in the discipline. Beyond this, it requires abilities to define instructional objectives, organize materials and activities for accomplishing these objectives, present materials clearly, and conduct classroom activities purposefully. It also engages students' minds, develops their skills consistent with course objectives, motivates them to perform to the best of their abilities, and evaluates their achievement.

Faculties that take these requirements of good teaching seriously are obliged to establish criteria for measuring the extent to which each of them is satisfied. They must ask, for ex-

ample, how their abilities to define objectives and organize materials are measured. By review of course syllabi? If so, what criteria are applied in reviewing them? Is there a model with which compliance is expected? Should there be? Are reviewers from other institutions invited to participate in the assessment of syllabi, reflecting the practice of reviewing scholarly work?

What do faculties expect of classroom activities? How do they assess presentation of instructional materials? Do members of the faculty exchange classroom visits? If so, by what criteria do they evaluate what they observe? How is information from students concerning the presentation of materials gathered? Does the faculty use a standard instrument for student evaluation of teaching or are multiple instruments used? Who designs them? How has the validity of the instruments been established? If graduate students teach, are they adequately trained and supervised?

Concerning practices for measuring student achievement—reflecting engagement of minds, development of skills, and motivation—does the faculty review course examinations for clarity, purpose, and effectiveness? If so, is this done before they are administered or after they are graded? Who does the reviewing? Against what criteria are they reviewed?

Beyond periodic and final exams, oral and written, does the faculty administer comprehensive essay examinations to seniors, testing their knowledge of history and their organizational, analytical, and writing abilities as well as their insights and perspectives? Does the faculty require senior research papers in which students are expected to demonstrate these abilities? Does it conduct oral interviews with the same objectives in mind? Does it use portfolios for reviewing seniors' work during the course of their studies? How does it keep track of its graduates and their success in graduate schools and careers?

Some of these questions might make history faculties uneasy—perhaps all the more reason for not ignoring them. To review majors honestly requires that such questions be addressed.

8. **History faculties should promote the history major effectively within the institution and beyond it.**

Historians have a story to tell, a discipline to represent. History is an attractive discipline that needs better descriptions of its character and purpose for prospective students. What matters most in promoting a history major, of course, is the quality of its content, structure, and teaching, but the packaging of the major matters, too.

The purposes and requirements of history majors are typically described blandly in college catalogs, conveying little of the excitement that the study of history holds. Accordingly, rewriting the catalog is often a first step in improving the presentation of the major. Publishing brochures that describe the purposes, content, structure, requirements, methodology, and pedagogy of the major is also desirable. So, too, is the publication of clear statements regarding career and professional options open to individuals with degrees in history. Although there may be reluctance by the faculty to "market" the history major, if marketing is necessary to advance it, such reluctance must be set aside. Professional associations in history should be prepared to provide assistance to institutions as they seek to improve their publications.

9. **To improve and advance their offerings and the place they claim in their institutions, history faculties should identify and address questions of strategy.**

The task force suggests that history faculties consider the following strategic questions as they rethink and redesign their majors and courses in their institutions:

- How can a faculty foster commitments to excellence in teaching when scholarly research is necessarily a high priority? How can it help its members establish connections between their research and their work in the classroom?

- What changes in the reward structure are needed to encourage more attention to improving teaching?
- What are internal and external forces affecting what faculties can and should do? How should they be addressed?
- How can the history major be made to reflect most clearly the purposes of the field and the commitments of the faculty?
- How can larger departments best address the problems associated with the major? Through committees on teaching? By establishing clearinghouses of information? By sponsoring informal gatherings on aspects of teaching?
- How can history faculties foster interdisciplinary experiences, creating productive ties with other humanities and social sciences disciplines?
- How can history faculties gain allies outside the classroom to support writing requirements in all courses and using writing assignments more effectively?
- What role should historians play in reshaping an institution's general education requirements?
- How do historians address different constituencies differently?
- How do historians deal with questions of citizenship—their own and their students'—in their courses? What is the "civic role" of history courses? What are the distinctions between citizenship and patriotism?
- How do historians establish history more clearly as an integrating discipline?
- How are history majors treated differently from nonmajors?
- How can history have an impact beyond the discipline itself?

Conclusion

As noted at the beginning of this report, the historians of the 1990s will carry the past into the twenty-first century. This report provides a rationale, encouragement, and recommendations for carrying it well—that is to say, for looking closely at the condition of history in college and university programs and working swiftly toward improving it. The report, then, is but the first step in what the members of the task force hope will be a vigorous and imaginative nationwide effort by history faculties to rethink, redefine, and redesign the history major and the courses we offer to our students.

NOTES