

## Book Reviews

that they are only history books. Inarticulate design and poor production simply do not constitute good scholarship. They result in incomplete communication. *Second View* not only proves that we can produce such books, but also demonstrates the reasons to produce them. The organizations, public and private, that funded the project may be proud, for the project deserved wide attention and the book is equal to the task. Its beauty will make it welcome company for the finest art books, its content demands its inclusion on the shelf of any serious historian, and overall it will prove to be an important moment in the history of photography.

NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

JOHN E. CARTER

*A Culture at Risk: Who Cares for America's Heritage?* by Charles Phillips and Patricia Hogan. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1984. xii, 95 pp. Figures, appendixes. \$10.00 paper.

*The Wages of History: The AASLH Employment Trends and Salary Survey*, by Charles Phillips and Patricia Hogan. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1984. xii, 87 pp. Tables, charts, appendixes. \$10.00 paper.

Together these two books provide a striking message: Americans love history, create historical societies and museums aplenty to preserve and protect their "heritage," and apparently believe firmly in the value of the past. However, those same Americans are reluctant or unwilling to fund those museums and historical agencies adequately, and in the majority of instances they depend on volunteers or overworked and underpaid staff to operate the places wherein history is preserved and interpreted.

The net result, according to authors Charles Phillips and Patricia Hogan, is a "culture at risk." Asserting that historical agencies and museums are "in the vanguard of collecting and preserving our cultural heritage," the authors declare that these organizations lack adequate resources to do the job for which they were created. As a consequence, "the physical remains of America's past—documents and artifacts alike—are in peril" (*A Culture at Risk*, 82). Proof of this overall conclusion is diminishing employment possibilities. Phillips and Hogan find a "profession dominated by young people . . . who came . . . at a time of hope and high growth" but who are now confronted by stagnating opportunities in a field that frankly cannot pay decently, provide the chance to advance, or employ younger, beginning-level people (*The Wages of History*, 75-76).

In reaching these conclusions, Phillips and Hogan relied on a 1983 survey of the museum and historical organization field. The first systematic attempt to gather and extrapolate data about public history institutions, the survey was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and conducted by the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH). Its data base came from questionnaires mailed to one thousand randomly selected institutions in the United States and Canada and 999 individual AASLH members. *A Culture at Risk* reports conclusions gleaned from the 562 institutional respondents within the United States; *The Wages of History* combines results from the institutional survey and from 765 individuals.

This methodology yielded gloomy results. In *A Culture at Risk*, Phillips and Hogan report that most historical organizations in the United States were founded after 1960, are privately run, operate in smaller cities and towns, have no permanent full-time staff, and usually exist with an annual budget of less than \$50,000. These organizations, however, offer major programs, including exhibits, documentary research collections, and publications, and most attract more than one thousand visitors each year even though they are open only seasonally. Because operating funds are a significant worry, most history museums budget little for exhibit development, collections acquisition and management, and especially for staff. Older institutions, conversely, generally operate in larger cities, have more than ten paid staff members, and benefit from tax-supported budgets in excess of \$100,000 per year. In other words, a sizeable gap exists between rich and poor in a field that is itself not wealthy. John Alexander Williams sketches the background to that situation in an informative opening essay, "American Historical Societies: Notes for a Survey."

*The Wages of History* profiles a stagnating employment picture. Historical agency staff are overwhelmingly white, usually younger than 45, and, as a rule, educated beyond the B.A. Over 36 percent of the full-time paid employees "serve as administrators or directors (and perhaps are the only paid staff)"; these administrators earn an average of slightly more than \$24,000 annually. Though about half of the professional employees in historical agencies are women, they are less likely to hold top positions and usually earn less than their male counterparts. Phillips and Hogan attribute this gender gap to the fact that women, in general, entered the public history profession later than men. The authors conclude that state and local history is a field populated by young professionals, but one that has not the capacity to sustain those workers or to nurture "new blood." Even with this proviso, more than 60 percent of history agencies have no full-time paid staff at all.

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To evaluate these findings, authors Phillips and Hogan note simply that historical museums and agencies are the "vanguard of collecting and preserving cultural heritage," but do so without adequate funds or support. They find a "full-fledged young profession" but one that is underpaid and short of opportunity. According to former AASLH director Gerald George, "the findings . . . constitute a call . . . for effective assistance . . . to meet the main goal [which is] the continued growth of historical consciousness in America" (*A Culture at Risk*, xii).

These works offer few surprises. Rarely does a staff person, whether professional or volunteer, work long for a museum or historical society without confronting the shortage of money, the overload of things to be done, and the vast public demand for services. Specific elements within the books may raise an eyebrow or two (for example, are salaries in the north-central region of the nation really better than elsewhere?) and some may question the survey questions and methodology, but very few public history workers will deny that their business needs greater support.

The issue, however, is whether anyone else really cares. The bottom line is the ability of state, county, and local museums and historical organizations to attract public support. Those organizations have rarely, if ever, perceived themselves in political terms, and that reluctance to become involved in the real world, to risk controversy and opposition, explains much about the present malaise that is so bluntly described in *The Wages of History* and *A Culture at Risk*. It would have been instructive had the questionnaire on which the two books are based tried to sample whether state and local history organizations are active or passive parts of their communities. More than likely, the former have stronger bases of support and consequently have greater financial resources.

In retrospect, the main value of Phillips's and Hogan's two books is in the clear compilation of information that "everybody knows." With this information workers in the field can develop and pursue specific policies designed to strengthen state and local history organizations and the profession. Contrary to popular belief, knowledge is not power, but it is most certainly the first step toward getting one's fair share.

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NORTH DAKOTA

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