

Careers for Students of History

The following list is adapted from the useful pamphlet, *Careers for Students of History* by Constance Schultz, Page Putnam Miller, Aaron Mars, and Kevin Allen (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 2002). An on-line version is available at www.historians.org

- 1) **Businesspeople:** Research and writing skills are valued in the corporate world; corporate recruiters seek out liberal arts and history majors because they want people who are broadly trained and can speak, write, and research clearly and effectively. Management training programs of major corporations desire candidates capable of critically analyzing large bodies of information. History majors are trained to develop such skills.
- 2) **Lawyers and Advocates:** People with history undergraduate degrees can go on to law school or become legal assistants. But a career in advocacy need not be restricted to the legal profession. Congress and the state legislatures hire large numbers of staff assistants, as do foundations and philanthropic groups. Historical training provides an excellent background for pursuing such occupations.
- 3) **Writers and Editors:** Historians with good writing and editing skills often work as journalists, editors at textbook publishing companies, or document editors for publishing projects (such as the papers of Frederick Douglass or of the U.S. Supreme Court). Some historians work as copy editors at magazines, or as free-lance editors for other scholars
- 4) **Researchers:** Historians are in demand to do research for policy organizations, museums, historic sites, and historical agencies. Their research skills can be valuable to publicly and privately funded policy organizations, research institutions, and think-tanks, such as the Brookings Institution, the Hoover Institute at Stanford University, the National Science Foundation, or the American Enterprise Institute. Museums need research done for mounting specific exhibits, documenting historically significant holdings, or managing culturally significant resources. Documentary filmmakers hire historians to find background material.
- 5) **Educators:** Many historians serve as educators, either at the secondary level or within community colleges, colleges, and universities. Others work at museums and historic sites ranging from the Smithsonian Institution to small local or county museums. The U.S. Armed Services have over 80 museums, for example; the National Park Service is responsible for over 350 historic sites, including battlefields, parks and monuments.
- 6) **Information Managers:** Information management takes many forms, and historians can be found in many areas of this work. Librarians often have undergraduate history degrees; archivists almost always do. Large numbers of government agencies hire information managers and archivists, but so also do hospitals, community organizations, museums, religious institutions, and comparable groups. Some corporations maintain their own archives and hire historians to manage them.

Career Preparation Suggestions for History Students at UD

1) **Internships** provide excellent opportunities to get “hands-on” experience in History and related fields; if taken for History credit, an internship can fulfill UD’s Discovery Learning Experience (DLE) requirement.

In recent years, UD History majors have completed internships at, among other locations, the Delaware State Legislature, Fort Delaware, the Hagley Museum and Library, the Historical Society of Delaware, the Lewes (Delaware) Historical Society, the “Lost Towns” Project in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, WHYY radio in Philadelphia, the National Constitution Center, the Henry Hudson replica ship “Half Moon” in New York, and the Historical Society of Palm Beach County, Florida.

For students seeking internships, here are a few web sites of interest:

Legislative Fellows Program: <http://www.ipa.udel.edu/legfellows/>
American Historical Association: www.historians.org
Center for History and New Media, George Mason University: chnm.gmu.edu/
National Archives and Records Administration: www.archives.gov
National Constitution Center, Philadelphia: www.constitutioncenter.org
National Park Service: www.nps.gov
National Trust for Historic Preservation: www.nationaltrust.org
Preservation Action: www.preservationaction.org
Society for History in the Federal Government: www.shfg.org
Smithsonian Institution www.si.edu
Student Conservation Association: www.thesca.org

2) **Summer work** in a field related to the student’s career interests. A summer job in a business or legal firm, at a newspaper or magazine, at a historic site or national park, or with a publisher enables one to get a sense of possible careers in those fields.

3) Choosing a **double major** or taking a **minor** field in a related area. Students interested in public service or legal careers often combine History with Political Science or Legal Studies. Students thinking about museum or library careers find the following combinations appealing: History and Art History; History and English; History and Anthropology; History and Material Culture Studies. History majors interested in careers in journalism take the English Department’s minor in Journalism; a double major in History and English can lead to a career in editorial or publishing work. Combining History with Sociology or Women’s Studies can prepare one for a career in advocacy, public service, law enforcement, or at a non-profit agency.

4) Acquiring **additional skills**, such as computer or foreign language training.

5) Planning ahead for **graduate school training** in History, Library Science, Law, Business, Archival Management, or Museum Studies.