

Discover how a bachelor's degree in history can start a lifelong career.

“What can I do with a major in history?”

“What careers are open to me if I want to be an historian?”

Students see the study of history not as part of a general education preparing them to be something else, but as a discipline and a profession with interests, skills, and methods in which they wish to be engaged. Graduates can apply their history degree in a variety of workplaces and under a variety of job titles as a history professional. Professional historians need diverse skills because they often carry out multiple historical activities in any particular workplace.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' “Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics” Report released in May 2020 recorded that the Mean Hourly Wage for historians was \$32.88 with a Mean Annual Salary of \$68,400.



Federal Executive Branch

Average Mean Wage -- \$103,590 | Job Outlook—3% growth by 2029.

The federal government offers a wide array of job opportunities. Historians may oversee a number of writers working on a number of projects, which will require them to develop leadership and supervisory skills. An eye for organization and budget analysis is often essential. Historians are also employed in the realm of public policy development, working for agencies that formulate policy and develop legislation.

Historians can find a broader range of employment in the federal government. Many agencies hire historians to write histories of significant moments or events within the agency. Historians who enjoy “traditional” fields such as military, political, or diplomatic history may find this work rewarding. Many of these publications are designed for in-house use by the agency or as a reference for other scholars.

The work of these historians is also subject to agency review since it falls under the mission of the agency. A good example of this type of material is the Foreign Relations of the United States series produced by the Department of State's historical office, which chronicles the links between our country and the rest of the world. Publications also illuminate the careers of ambassadors and the travels of the president and secretaries of state. More specialized projects address issues of both historical and contemporary importance. Most historians engaged in government research and writing also produce works for consumption by the general public.

Federal historians are called upon to do additional work besides research and writing. Many historians are required to do reference work, taking queries from their own agency, other government agencies, journalists, and the general public. In many cases may need immediate answers, requiring a good command of the workings of the agency. Historians may also need to prepare briefings for people about to testify for Congress or may be asked to testify themselves. In each case, the

ability to provide clear, cogent answers to difficult questions is the principal value of the historian. (Source: American Historical Association)



State Government

Average Mean Wage -- \$55,550 | Job Outlook—3% growth by 2029.

Perhaps the most effective level of public preservation activity occurs at state historic preservation offices. As mandated in the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act, each state is required to maintain an office to act as a mediator between federal and local historic preservation agencies. These offices employ historians and preservation professionals to conduct state surveys, create educational programs, monitor Section 106 compliance, and prepare and evaluate National Register nominations.

State historical societies often offer information of interest about the state and hold significant archives for genealogical and historical research. Most historians engaged in government research and writing also produce works for consumption by the general public. Many historians are required to do reference work, taking queries from their own agency, other government agencies, journalists, and the general public. In many cases, such as requests from journalists or members of state legislatures or agencies, reference requests may need immediate answers, requiring a good command of the workings of the agency. Historians may also need to prepare briefings for people about to testify for state legislatures, committees, or agencies. In each case, the ability to provide clear, cogent answers to difficult questions is the principal value of the historian.

Historians are primarily valued for their ability to “get to the bottom of things” by determining the source of a problem and their ability to discern multiple viewpoints on a given issue. (Source: American Historical Association)



Local Government

Average Mean Wage -- \$42,360 | Job Outlook—3% growth by 2029.

At the local level, more and more municipalities are realizing the value of historic resources for encouraging tourism, economic development, and community pride. Some city and county governments employ preservationists to evaluate local

cultural resources. Usually located in planning or economic development offices, local cultural resource managers draft and administer local preservation regulations. Preservation professionals, at the local level, are generally expected to be responsible for a number of non-research-related tasks as well.

The variety of jobs available for employment include: archival, curatorial, collections, conservation, development, director/administration, education, interpretation, preservation, publications, public relations/marketing, and registrars. Despite the differences in size, these organizations do a variety of things: collect artifacts for display, provide access to manuscript archives, publish documentary editions of manuscripts, provide reference services to the community, assist schools with educational programs, act on behalf of the preservation of local landmarks, or maintain sites of historic interest. All of these functions take place primarily for the local community.

Local historians must devise ways to keep history in the public eye, such as working with schools, providing a weekly column in the local newspaper, or writing booklets on aspects of the community's history. These last suggestions point to another important part of the local historian's tasks: research. Historians must research local history and find compelling ways to connect a particular place to other places and a particular story to other stories across the nation and around the world. Another critical role that local historians play is providing reference services for the community. This requires dedication and competence on the part of the local historian. (Source: American Historical Association)



Museum Curator

Average Mean Wage -- \$52,140 | Job Outlook—19% growth by 2029.

The curatorial department is the area of the museum most closely associated with historians. The curator's major duties normally revolve around the museum collection, whether acquiring new objects, writing exhibit scripts, or preparing grant applications. Normally the plum position of curator requires a doctoral degree and a number of years of related professional experience. Other positions, however, like that of assistant curator, writer, or research assistant, offer entry-level opportunities for gaining curatorial experience. Curators are often a museum's sole link to the academic community, and therefore may be expected to attend conferences, contribute to scholarly publications, and make public presentations. (Source: American Historical Association)



Museum Registrar/Collections Manager

Average Mean Wage -- \$57,800 | Job Outlook—19% growth by 2029.

While the curator presumably has an intimate knowledge of the objects in the collection, it is the collections management staff that actually knows how to find them. The registrar is responsible not only for making sure that the collection is fully documented and accounted for, but also for making the museum's cultural resources available to researchers. In smaller museums the position of registrar is often absorbed into the role of curator. Duties may include dealing with research requests, cataloguing objects, or creating finding aids. In many ways the duties and responsibilities of a registrar and an archivist overlap. Training for this position requires experience with information technology, cataloguing schemes, and terminology standardization. An academic background in history, in addition to the technical skills needed for the position, will equip the registrar with the research abilities needed to properly identify and classify collection objects. An insight into the needs of the historical researcher will better prepare a registrar to document and arrange the collection in an accessible and logical way. (Source: American Historical Association)



Museum Education

Average Mean Wage – \$39,946 | Job Outlook—19% growth by 2029.

The bridge between the public and the museum's exhibits and collections is the education staff. Of course, most exhibits are intended to impart the necessary information through object displays, audiovisual aids, hands-on exhibits, and other methods. However, only a small minority of visitors will read every panel or see every video.

The education officer is responsible for designing programs that target the museum's resources toward a number of different categories of visitor. This may include creating several types of tours, creating interactive education programs as well as planning special events in conjunction with recent exhibits. Recently many education departments have taken their programs out of the museum and into the schools in order to reach a broader audience. By creating materials that connect the museum's message with some element of a teacher's curriculum, both teachers and students have the opportunity for an enhanced

lesson, and the museum can increase its visibility and attendance. An education office will also usually be responsible for training and scheduling those most valuable of resources, docents and volunteers.

An education officer at a history museum ideally has a background in education as well as history, but most importantly must possess the twin virtues of patience and creativity. Not every museum exhibit is geared toward a universal audience, but the education department is responsible for finding innovative ways to reach a diverse community. (Source: American Historical Association)

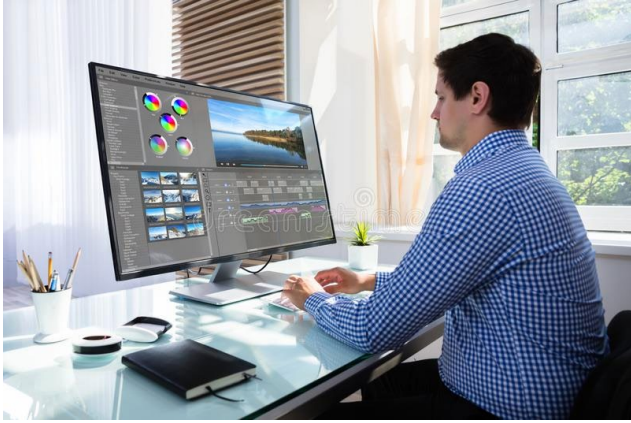


Museum Conservator

Average Mean Wage -- \$59,816 | Job Outlook—19% growth by 2029.

Most of those drawn to the field of conservation are interested in studying history through the physical record of material culture. This philosophy contends that an object is more than the observable information it provides; that the material itself can show us vividly what no written transcription can. Conservators differ from restorers and renovators in that most current conservation theory looks to maintain the integrity of the object as much as possible through the use of reversible repairs and support. The ideal conservator has proficiency and skill in three different fields—history (or art history), chemistry, and studio arts. Because of the rigorous training involved and the small number of universities that offer degree programs, conservation is a highly competitive field. Conservators normally concentrate in a specific type of artifact. Paintings, paper, textiles, and three-dimensional objects are a few of the specializations in greatest demand at museums.

The conservation staff is normally responsible for repairs and stabilization of collection objects, as well as keeping detailed records of any and all conservation work done, both on the museum collections and on loan material from other institutions. Additional duties include maintaining stable environmental conditions for objects on exhibit and in storage. (Source: American Historical Association)



Documentary Editor

Average Mean Wage -- \$53,535 | Job Outlook—13% growth by 2029.

Those who work on documentary editions may find themselves doing a variety of tasks. Fundamental to this work, however, is determining the authenticity of the documents and putting them in the appropriate historical context. Jobs in documentary editing projects, therefore, tend to go to those candidates with the best historical training in the area of the project.

Documentary editions can collect the writings of a single author, a group of people, an organization, or an institution. It is the responsibility of a team of editors to select, transcribe, annotate, index, and proofread the documents that are included in the edition.

An individual or group may generate thousands of documents, but a project on a tight budget can print only a small percentage of these. Therefore, documentary editors must be able to judge the historical significance of individual documents and determine which are worthy of publication. After selecting the documents, editors must transcribe their contents. This may include such tasks as keyboarding and proofreading them for publishing in a book, or marking them up for display on the Internet.

Historians with an aptitude and interest in computing may find rewarding employment in this field, as the Internet is being increasingly used to broaden the audience for documentary editions. An electronic edition can offer full-text searching and other capabilities unavailable in the print version. But editors must consider the fact that making documentary works available online broadens the audience to include anyone with a computer. Therefore, editors must carefully consider the type of historical context that is necessary to accommodate a wide array of users, whose understanding of the subject may range from grade school level to graduate school.

Historical context is provided through annotation in footnotes, endnotes, or electronic hyperlinks to further information and explanatory material. The contextual level may vary from edition to edition, but editors cannot desert the reader to navigate through the documents alone. The editor must assist a reader unfamiliar with obscure references, dates, phrases, names, idioms, and places that might be found in the material. Here, the historian's aptitude for research plays a key role. Editors must be dedicated to accuracy, since most readers will take the editor's word as final.

Documentary editors also proofread and index the volume in preparation for publication. Both activities require close attention to detail, since inaccuracies and transcription errors can spring up at any point in the editing process. Indexing, while it may sound tedious, requires intellectual vigor. It may be simple to index proper names and places, but indexing ideas and concepts in a compact and readily understandable way demands clarity and precision. After a collection of documents is finally published, the editors should make sure that interested audiences know about it. For some editors, widespread recognition is easy to achieve because of the fame of their subject. Editors working with less well-known subjects may have to spread the word through exhibits, teaching aids for high school and college teachers, or presentations at academic conferences. Primary source collections are meant to be used, and editors must take the necessary steps to insure that their hard work has paid off. (Source: American Historical Association)



Scholarly Publisher

Average Mean Wage -- \$58,928 | Job Outlook—5% growth by 2029.

A person interested in working in the publishing field should have training in the preferred area of specialization—in this case, history. Some schools offer specialized degree or certificate programs for publishing, and relevant course work might include copyediting, substantive editing, and the basics of book production and design. But no amount of formal training can supplant a gift for the English language and a close attention to detail. An ability to keep multiple high-quality projects on schedule is essential. Since book publishing is a business, some knowledge of financial matters is helpful.

The type of work required by an editor in a scholarly or commercial press will, of course, depend on the size and sophistication of the press. As a general rule, editors start with manuscripts, solicited or unsolicited. An editor, usually with the advice of peer reviewers, may reject a manuscript at this stage in the process, or decide to work with an author to improve the text for publication. Although the author is usually responsible for securing illustrations and acquiring permission to use copyrighted material, the editor works with the production staff to create a well-designed book of high quality. The editor also works with the marketing staff to see that the book is publicized and advertised in a way that maximizes its sales.

Publishers establish relationships with book distributors in order to ensure their titles get noticed when libraries develop their acquisition plans. Publishing is a business, and editors will not succeed if they cannot create quality products that generate income for or enhance the reputation of the parent corporation. Some editors prefer to work as freelance copy or developmental editors. This allows more flexibility and independence, and permits the editor to work for a variety of publishers in fields that interest them.

Editors for scholarly journals have a slightly different set of tasks. Authors submit articles, and editors must decide which ones are worth sending to referees for peer review and potential publication. This means that an editor must be familiar enough with the field to determine appropriate reviewers for a particular article. Editors must exercise the same judgment in the selection of book reviewers. Editors may also actively solicit articles on a given subject for special issues of the journal. Thus, the job of journal editor requires one to be active and up-to-date with the state of scholarly research in the journal's field. Editors of scholarly journals are usually academic historians who serve in this capacity for a few years in addition to teaching. (Source: American Historical Association)



Genealogists

Average Mean Wage -- \$67,034 | Job Outlook—11% growth by 2029.

The primary responsibility of genealogists is to conduct research into the background of families or individuals to establish the specific ancestor that they descended from. They might even act in a consulting capacity, which involves directing the research of records clerks and archival technicians as well as compiling their research findings into a report that's presented to a client.



Archivist (General)

Average Mean Wage -- \$58,723 | Job Outlook—19% growth by 2029.

Archivists are the custodians of historical information. They are responsible for acquiring, appraising, preserving, describing, and facilitating access to records that have timeless value. Some archivists even do historical research. Archivists typically work with records throughout their professional lives and oversee the retention or disposal of the same in an archive.



Acquisitions Archivist

Average Mean Wage -- \$56,226 | Job Outlook—19% growth by 2029.

Acquisitions archivists are responsible for bringing material into the collection. In an institution where state law or corporate policy decrees that material must be sent to the archives, this archivist insures that the appropriate material is actually received. In a manuscript collection or archives where material does not arrive automatically, archivists must identify existing collections that fit the collecting policy of their institution and work with donors to secure them for the institution. A knowledge of history helps these archivists understand what material will help augment and improve the holdings of their institution. (Source: American Historical Association)



Processing Archivist

Average Mean Wage -- \$56,226 | Job Outlook—19% growth by 2029.

Processing archivists prepare collections for use by researchers and create the tools that help those researchers find information within them. They “arrange” a collection by determining the best order for documents within a collection, and they “appraise” a collection by assessing the historical significance of materials in the collections and deciding whether the documents will be retained. Because this job entails discarding parts of the collection, a keen eye and understanding of history are vital for this work. A processing archivist must balance historical relevance and the potential needs of researchers against the equally real constraints of time and ability of the archives to maintain the collection. The final product of the processing archivist’s work is a finding aid to the collection, which describes the contents of the collection in detail. (Source: American Historical Association)



Reference Archivist

Average Mean Wage -- \$56,226 | Job Outlook—19% growth by 2029.

Reference archivists serve as a liaison between the researching public and the institution. As the public face of the archives, they must have good interpersonal skills and understand how to help a diverse body of researchers, from experienced scholars to amateur genealogists. They must be expertly familiar with the holdings of the institution and able to recommend new avenues of exploration to researchers. In addition, they must have the ability to make connections between users' requests and recent secondary literature, as well as a knowledge of the related holdings in other repositories. (Source: American Historical Association)



Historians as Consultants and Contractors: Preservation/Land Use

Average Mean Wage -- \$56,617 | Job Outlook—3% growth by 2029.

Some firms are devoted primarily to cultural resource issues, which require expertise in such fields as archaeology, historic preservation, and museum and exhibit production. Because of the far-reaching effects of Section 106, consultants are often called upon by public and private agencies to conduct surveys of historic resources on a potential building site. Section 106 compliance, however, is not the only impetus for hiring a contractor. A consultant may be called upon to propose potential sites or districts for nomination to the National Register or provide guidelines for local architectural design standards. Planning firms will frequently employ a historian with architecture or planning experience. A thorough knowledge of historic land use can also be helpful to geographers, biologists, and hydrologists who are trying to trace changes in environmental conditions over time. Historic land use can be important in determining potential environmental hazards that would endanger future development. (Source: American Historical Association)



Historians as Consultants and Contractors: Museums

Average Mean Wage -- \$70,134 | Job Outlook—3% growth by 2029.

Museums of every size can often benefit from the experience and resources of an outside contractor. Because object conservation can be a costly endeavor, few museums are able to maintain a proper conservation lab and a full-time conservator. Contract conservation, whether performed by a firm or by independent conservators, can provide specialized skills and equipment for repairs, exhibit preparation, re-housing, and preventive care. Other museum contractors aid in exhibit production. A contractor or consultant may bid on a curatorial project, which usually involves researching and writing exhibit scripts. An outside agency can also be called upon for exhibit design and fabrication for a specialized exhibit, either to assist a busy staff or simply to offer a fresh perspective. Many design firms specialize in museum production while others are hired to facilitate large-scale traveling exhibitions. (Source: American Historical Association)



Historians as Consultants and Contractors: Archives

Average Mean Wage -- \$59,610 | Job Outlook—5% growth by 2029.

The often staggering amount of new acquisitions, in addition to a substantial backlog, can lead some archives to hire an outside contractor or consultant to assess the preservation status of an institution's holdings, process a discrete collection, or perform another project-based task. Independent archivists can also be called upon by private businesses looking to reorganize their institutional files. (Source: American Historical Association)



Historians as Consultants and Contractors: Media

Average Mean Wage -- \$49,525 | Job Outlook—3% growth by 2029.

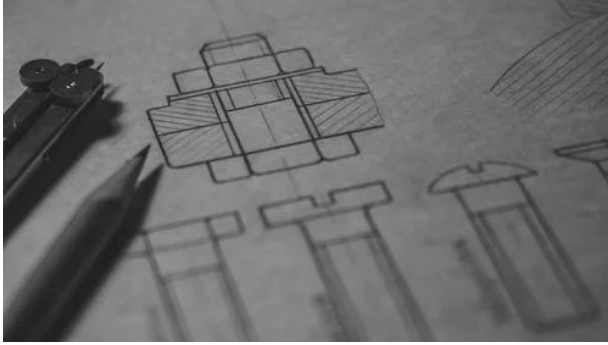
An increasingly sophisticated audience is demanding greater historical integrity in media productions. Producers of documentaries, dramatic films, and educational programming often hire historical consultants to advise on costumes, scenery, props, dialect, and content accuracy. Most television networks and large production companies will require the services of a historian, and some consulting firms specialize in media productions and the entertainment industry. (Source: American Historical Association)



Preservation Architect

Average Mean Wage -- \$86,484 | Job Outlook—5% growth by 2029.

A historic preservation architect helps preserve old buildings that have historical value. Duties in this career include making repairs and renovations that do not alter the interior or exterior appearance of the building. Additional duties include repair the structure, bring the building up to code, and take measures to ensure its longevity. Responsibilities usually involve making an initial assessment of the building and then working with historians, engineers, or other experts to create actionable conservation plans. In addition to safety and building code regulations, you also plan renovations that meet guidelines set out by organizations like the National Register of Historic Places.



Preservation Engineer

Average Mean Wage -- \$70,811 | Job Outlook—5% growth by 2029.

Buildings can be one of the most difficult pieces of history to preserve and many can be difficult to adapt to modern technology while preserving the original historical elements. Historic preservation engineering can cover all engineering disciplines from structural engineering to stabilize a building to electrical engineering to provide power to a structure built before electricity was widely used. Depending on how thorough the project, materials testing may be done to better repair damaged pieces or replace missing ones. Historic preservation can take place on the exterior, as well as the interior, in structures as small as a shack and as big as castles. Some projects are all about preserving the history of the building, such as stabilizing temperature and humidity to reduce stress on old plaster or keep metal from rusting. Priceless works of art, such as murals and even organs, are also greatly affected by environmental conditions that need to be artificially regulated.



Librarian

Average Mean Wage -- \$61,584 | Job Outlook—5% growth by 2029.

The role of a librarian is one of the most commonly pursued by history majors. History is often cited as a background for one to become a librarian since the degree primes a person for researching and organizing information. In this line of work, a person spends most of his/her working time organizing and filing information and data according to various categorizations and classifications.



Historians in Classrooms: Primary and Secondary Education

Average Mean Wage -- \$62,870 | Job Outlook—8% growth by 2029.

Preparation for teaching history in either private or public schools at the kindergarten through twelfth grade levels requires at least a bachelor's degree. For careers in public schools, that degree can include a major in history but will also require a substantial concentration in education courses that prepare candidates to meet teaching certification requirements. These differ somewhat from state to state but are universal in that all states have such requirements. Programs of undergraduate study that meet those requirements commonly include specialized courses in psychology, human development, and teaching techniques, as well as a supervised period of practice teaching.

At the secondary level, the emphasis on social studies as a composite field including anthropology, economics, geography, political science, and sociology may mean that students must take sufficient introductory courses to qualify in a number of these areas and as a result will not be able to take more than a few advanced history courses. It is desirable, and possible, for teachers to have a strong undergraduate background in history in order to teach it at the secondary level. (Source: American Historical Association)



Historians in Classrooms: Community and Two-Year Colleges

Average Mean Wage -- \$59,539 | Job Outlook—11% growth by 2029.

The mission of these colleges is primarily to teach. While some advanced courses may be offered, often related to understanding and interpreting the history of the college's local community, the bread and butter for historians in this academic setting is teaching introductory or survey courses, which touch on many topics, typically over a widely accepted historical period. The number of courses a historian teaches each term may be higher than at universities with graduate

programs, making it difficult to find time to carry out research and publication activities even if they are not actively discouraged. These activities may also be less essential in hiring and promotion decisions. Demonstrated experience in teaching, a commitment to community service, and skill in administrative tasks can all be important parts of training for community college careers. (Source: American Historical Association)



Historians in Classrooms: Undergraduate Colleges

Average Mean Wage -- \$80,790 | Job Outlook—9% growth by 2029.

The mission of these colleges, which award only baccalaureate degrees, is also primarily teaching. Most historians on these faculties teach survey courses in American history, Western civilization, or world civilization, but they also have opportunities to develop advanced courses in their own area of interest or specialization. Such colleges pride themselves on small class size, which many teachers favor. On the other hand, depending on the size of the student body and the financial situation of the college, the number of courses a faculty member teaches may be quite high. Research and publication, and other scholarly activity, are usually valued and encouraged, but the time for these activities may be limited. Advising, committee, and administrative tasks can also be an important part of faculty workload. Preparation for careers in four-year institutions should thus stress ability to work with individuals or small groups of students. (Source: American Historical Association)



Historians in Classrooms: Graduate Universities

Average Mean Wage -- \$80,790 | Job Outlook—9% growth by 2029.

Graduate universities offer baccalaureate degrees, as well as graduate degrees. Faculty at these institutions, both private and public, teach at multiple levels. They offer introductory survey courses, sometimes in small classes, but more often to large

sections that can have as many as 400 or 500 students. They teach upper-level undergraduate courses in their own specialization. They are responsible for graduate reading and research seminars where group discussions replace prepared lectures. They also supervise M.A. theses and Ph.D. dissertations and serve on the graduate academic committees of other students in the department and university. University history departments also depend on their faculty to serve on committees, take on administrative tasks, do general graduate and undergraduate student advising, and may also encourage scholars to take on leadership roles in regional and national professional associations.

As important as teaching and service are, however, a primary purpose of the comprehensive university is the advancement of knowledge. As a result, research and publication (in articles, books, and scholarly presentations at professional meetings) are essential for initial employment, promotion, and tenure. Scholarship remains the most important criterion for advancement in the university and the profession, so career training and preparation must include as many opportunities for gaining such experience as students or their departments can create for graduate study. (Source: American Historical Association)