



Outside the Textbook: Writing History for Everyone

2006 Massachusetts History Conference

Sponsored by the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities and the University of Massachusetts Amherst Program in Public History. Hosted by the Clark University History Department.

Monday, June 12, 2006

9:00 am – 3:00 pm

**Higgins University Center, Clark University
Worcester, MA**

9:00 – 9:30 Registration and coffee

9:30 – 9:40 Welcome

Ellen K. Rothman, Associate Director, Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities

Marla R. Miller, Director, University of Massachusetts Amherst Program in Public History

9:40 – 10:00 ***Bay State Legacy Award Presentation by David Glassberg, Professor of History, University of Massachusetts Amherst***

For many years, the Bay State Historical League presented the John F. Ayer Award to an individual who had made an outstanding contribution to the interpretation and presentation of Massachusetts history. We are delighted to continue the tradition of the Ayer Award through awarding the second annual Bay State Legacy Award to Peter S. O'Connell, longtime Director of Museum Education at Old Sturbridge Village and since 1996, Director of the Tsongas Industrial History Center in Lowell.

10:00 - 11:15 Concurrent Sessions

1 A. ***Organizing Reading and Discussion Groups***

History/biography reading and discussion series bring people with an interest in history together to share ideas and build support for the sponsoring organization. Presenters from the Lexington Historical Society and the Emily Dickinson Museum will discuss their experiences organizing and operating readers' circles and book groups, with particular attention to the selection of themes and the development of reading lists.

- Cindy Dickinson, Director of Interpretation and Programming, and Tricia Gilrein, Program Coordinator, Emily Dickinson Museum, Amherst
- Susan Rockwell, Lexington Historical Society

1 B. ***The Writing on the Wall: Clear, Concise, and Catchy Exhibits***

What's the secret to crafting effective exhibit text? Which details bring your story to life, and which bog it down? This session will provide attendees with tips on writing visitor-friendly text for the display case or the wall, as well as specific “nuts and bolts” recommendations to increase readability and clarity.

- Sari Boren, Principal and Exhibit Developer, Wondercabinet Interpretive Design
- Cynthia Robinson, Interpretive Specialist.

1 C. ***Writing History for Children***

A good book has sparked a lifetime interest in history for many a young reader. In this session, award-winning authors will share their experiences in crafting compelling narratives, both fictional and nonfictional, around events in Massachusetts history. Issues discussed will include finding a story that lends itself to fictionalization, character and plot development, appropriate use of creative license, and incorporating historical/archival research into the narrative.

- Carol Hurst, author (*A Killing in Plymouth Colony, In Plain Sight, You Come to Yokum*)
- Marcia Sewall, author (*Pilgrims of Plimoth, People of the Breaking Day, Thunder From the Clear Sky*)

1 D. ***Creative Publishing Options for Local History***

Ever had something to share that did not fit a traditional format? This panel will explore creative ways of sharing local history with the public, including newspaper columns, online journals (blogs), public access television, and self-publication.

- Mary Fuhrer, editor, *Letters from the Old Home Place*
- Larry Ruttman, author, *Voices of Brookline* and “Brookline Then and Now” (*Brookline Tab*) and producer, “From Community to Cyberspace”
- Charles Swift, blogger, editor, *The City Record and Boston News-Letter*

11:15 - 11:30 Break

11:30 – 12:30 Keynote Address: Anita Diamant

Writing The Last Days of Dogtown: A Novelist Brings History to Life

Anita Diamant, whose most recent novel, *The Last Days of Dogtown*, is set in early nineteenth century Gloucester, is best known for *The Red Tent*, a word-of-mouth bestseller based on chapter 34 in the biblical book of Genesis. Her writing career began as a Boston-based freelancer in the 1970s. In the 1980s, she began writing about contemporary Jewish practice, including six handbooks to Jewish life. Since *The Red Tent* was published in 1997, she has written two other novels - *Good Harbor*, set in the present, and *The Last Days of Dogtown*, which like *The Red Tent*, retells and reinvents an obscure chapter in history from the point of view of "minor" characters.

12:30 – 1:00 Book signing by Anita Diamant (books will be available for purchase)

12:30 – 1:45 Lunch (vegetarian option provided)

1:45 – 3:00 Concurrent Sessions

2 A. ***Writing for the Round Number***

At any given time, towns across Massachusetts are marking major milestones. This session will feature different ways to involve the community in celebrating its history.

- Paul Farwell, playwright, “Over the River and Through the Wood,” a musical celebration of Watertown’s 375th anniversary
- Stephanie Pasternak, Cummington Historical Commission, “Only One Cummington” Project
- Steve Strimer, Northampton 350th Anniversary Committee

2 B. ***The Interplay of Fact and Invention in Public History***

This session will explore how to strike a balance between fact and invention in historical interpretation. Presenters will consider the merits of various forms of presentation, including living history performances, first-person interpretation, and educational drama. They will discuss both the importance of imagination and storytelling in bringing the past to life and the potential pitfalls that accompany the decision to take “creative license.” They will also reflect upon the writing process that goes into these programs.

- Carol Constant, Director, Wistariahurst Museum
- Wendy Lement, Artistic Director, Theatre Espresso
- Jan Turnquist, Executive Director, Orchard House – Home of the Alcotts, and living history performer
- Staff, Interpretive Programs, Plimoth Plantation

2 C. ***Writing Local History for the Web***

Overcoming barriers of geography, transportation, and cost, virtual exhibits and other online content are easily accessible to a wide audience. At the same time, “virtual history” poses unique challenges, requiring a distinctive approach to writing and design. Panelists will present examples of successful local history websites.

- Elizabeth Harlow and John Diffley, UMASS Program in Public History, W.E.B. DuBois Homesite Website Project
- Lynne Spichiger, Director of Online Exhibits, and Barbara Mathews, Director of Education Programs, Deerfield Teachers’ Center, Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association
- Al Stevens, independent consultant

2 D. ***Workshop: Utilizing Your Collection to Develop Programs for Young Writers***

Every museum or historical society, no matter how small, has primary sources that can serve as the basis for engaging education programs for young writers. Gretchen Adams will present *Paul Revere in Primary Sources*, which makes documents from the Paul Revere House’s manuscript collection available to teachers for use in classroom writing and research projects.

- Gretchen Adams, Education Director, Paul Revere House

This conference is made possible with support from the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities and the University of Massachusetts Amherst Program in Public History. For more information, please visit www.mfh.org/newsandevents/calendar/history.html or www.umass.edu/history/ph/index.html or call 617-923-1678.

Space is limited. Reservations required.



**Directions to
Clark University**
950 Main Street, Worcester, MA
508-793-7711 www.clarku.edu

Take I-90 (Massachusetts Turnpike) to Exit 10 (290 East, Auburn/Worcester). Take Exit 11 (College Square/Federal Square) off 290. Go straight, following sign for Federal Square/Downtown. At second traffic light take a left onto Cambridge Street (St. Matthew's Church on left and Culpeppers Bakery on right). Go one mile to the end of Cambridge Street. Take a sharp right onto Main Street. Go to the first traffic light at Maywood Street. Parking is available in lots at the corner of Main Street and Grand Street, as well as in the Maywood Street Parking Lot.



Outside the Textbook: Writing History for Everyone Registration Form for June 12, 2006.

Name _____
 Organization _____
 Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____ Email _____

Please check the sessions you will attend.
 Sessions will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis.
Please note: no confirmations will be sent.

Morning Sessions (choose one)

10:00 -11:15

- 1A) ___ Organizing Reading and Discussion Groups
- 1B) ___ Writing Clear, Concise and Catchy Exhibit Text
- 1C) ___ Writing History for Children
- 1D) ___ Creative Publishing Options for Local History

Afternoon Sessions (choose one)

1:30- 2:45

- 2A) ___ Writing for the Round Number
- 2B) ___ The Interplay of Fact and Invention in Public History
- 2C) ___ Writing Local History for the Web
- 2D) ___ Workshop: Utilizing Your Collection to Develop Programs for Young Writers

Registration Fee includes morning refreshments and box lunch (vegetarian option available).

Registration Deadline: Thursday, June 1

Registration Fee.....	\$40.00.....	\$ _____
Registration Fee for students (include copy of student ID)	\$25.00.....	\$ _____
TOTAL ENCLOSED		\$ _____

Make checks payable to the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities and mail to
 Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities, 66 Bridge Street, Northampton, MA 01060.
 Registrations cannot be refunded; however you may send another person in your place.
 Questions? Call 617-923-1678.