



HISTORY RELEVANCE

THE VALUE OF HISTORY

SEVEN WAYS IT IS ESSENTIAL

History Relevance promotes a shared language, tools, and strategies to mobilize history organizations in the United States around the relevance and value of history. We support history organizations that encourage the public to use historical thinking skills to actively engage with and address contemporary issues and to value history for its relevance to modern life.

TO OURSELVES

IDENTITY

History nurtures personal and collective identity in a diverse world. People discover their place in time through stories of their families, communities, and nation. These stories of freedom and equality, injustice and struggle, loss and achievement, and courage and triumph shape people's personal values that guide them through life.

CRITICAL THINKING

History teaches vital skills. Historical thinking requires critical approaches to evidence and argument and develops contextual understanding and historical perspective, encouraging meaningful engagement with concepts like continuity, change, and causation, and the ability to interpret and communicate complex ideas clearly and coherently.

TO OUR COMMUNITIES

VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

History is the foundation for strong, vibrant communities. A place becomes a community when wrapped in human memory as told through family stories, tribal traditions, and civic commemorations as well as discussions about our roles and responsibilities to each other and the places we call home.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

History is a catalyst for economic growth. Communities with cultural heritage institutions and a strong sense of historical character attract talent, increase tourism revenues, enhance business development, and fortify local economies.

TO OUR FUTURE

ENGAGED CITIZENS

History helps people envision a better future. Democracy thrives when individuals convene to express opinions, listen to others, and take action. Weaving history into discussions about contemporary issues clarifies differing perspectives and misperceptions, reveals complexities, grounds competing views in evidence, and introduces new ideas; all can lead to greater understanding and viable community solutions.

LEADERSHIP

History inspires leaders. History provides today's leaders with role models as they navigate through the complexities of modern life. The stories of persons from the past can offer direction to contemporary leaders and help clarify their values and ideals.

LEGACY

History, saved and preserved, is the foundation for future generations. Historical knowledge is crucial to protecting democracy. By preserving authentic and meaningful documents, artifacts, images, stories, and places, future generations have a foundation on which to build and know what it means to be a member of the civic community.

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WHO WE ARE

The History Relevance Campaign is a group of history professionals posing questions about what makes history relevant today. The group came together in early 2013 and has held meetings, sessions, and open forums to formulate these seven principles at the American Alliance of Museums (2013), National Council on Public History (2013 and 2014), National History Day (2013), American Association for State and Local History (2013, 2014 and 2015), Idaho Heritage Conference (2013), American Historical Association (2014), New Jersey History and Historic Preservation Conference (2014), State Historical Administrators Meeting (2013 and 2014), the Smithsonian Affiliates Conference (2014), and the Virginia Association of Museums (2015). We thank the many conference session attendees who provided the ideas behind and wording for the seven values. These values also find expression in a framework developed by the State Historical Administrators Meeting.

CALL TO ACTION

We call on organizations to endorse, share, and use this statement on the value of history in contemporary life. With common agreement, commitment, and open conversation about why history is important, we believe the historical community can change the common perception that history is nice, but not essential.

Endorsing this statement in principle is an initial step. We encourage you to adapt and incorporate these ideas into projects, training materials, mission statements, websites, marketing materials, and other institutional outlets. The seven core values are not new, but we believe that their articulation with the intent to make real, measurable change across the profession and into public realms represents a fresh start for our discipline.

More than 250 organizations have endorsed the statement since 2014.

TO ENDORSE» HISTORYRELEVANCE.COM

