

Career Options

- Archivist
- Biographer
- Chief Executive Officer
- City Manager
- Corporate Historian
- Corporate Trainer
- Costume Designer
- Customs Investigator
- Editor (journals, trade books, magazines)
- Financial Analyst
- Foreign Service Officer
- Foundation Administrator
- Genealogist
- Government Administrator
- Historian
- Historic Preservation Consultant
- Historic Site Administrator
- Information Manager
- Information Specialist
- Insurance Agent
- Intelligence Officer
- Journalist (print, broadcast, internet)
- Lawyer
- Legal Assistant
- Legislative Aide/Analyst
- Librarian
- Loan Administrator
- Management Consultant
- Museum Curator/Staff
- Policy Analyst
- Politician
- Public Relations Representative
- Research/Technical Advisor (film/tv/radio)
- Sales/Marketing Representative
- Small Business Owner
- Teacher/Professor
- Urban Planner
- Writer/Technical Writer

What is History?

History is the study of the record of past human experience. Working with written, oral, visual, and artifacts, history majors examine the causes, contexts, and chronologies of historical events to understand how human experiences have both remained the same and changed over time. History studies past civilizations in order to understand the present, preserve our heritage, and appreciate the richness of human accomplishment. Almost every field—whether it be in the field of arts, science, or health—includes some study of its past. Therefore, many job opportunities in this field are in teaching. Other historians may work as archivists, genealogists, or curators. Some graduates use the critical-thinking skills they develop from history to go into administration or law.

Occupational Opportunities

The history major prepares students for careers demanding knowledge, understanding, perspective, skills, and sensitivities gained through studying history. Such careers are found in business, government, non-profit agencies, and elementary and secondary schools. Graduate work in history leads to careers in teaching and the secondary and college levels, as well as in museums, archives, and historical and government agencies. The history major also prepares students for advanced studies in law, business, medicine, and other professions.

Skills & Abilities

Skills gained through the study of history include analyzing and understanding the impact of historical forces on societies and perceiving how groups cope with changing circumstances. Students concentrating in history develop and hone skills in areas such as critical thinking, organization of ideas and supporting documentation, writing, and analysis. The abilities may be applied to job responsibilities in a variety of sectors and occupational groups. For example, while a policy analyst, an underwriter, or a museum curator might use critical thinking for different purposes, each will probably use that skill on a daily basis. A sampling of representative skills and abilities follows:

Research

- Analyzes ideas/information
- Adapts and organizes ideas
- Compiles and evaluates information
- Compares/contrasts ideas and information
- Understands and interpret the present/past

Understanding Society

- Analyzes impact of problems on society
- Knowledge of how societies cope with change
- Explains the present by referring to the past
- Develops a world view

Project Development

- Develops ideas and projects
- Plan/creates materials
- Organizes information
- Sees relationships between factors
- Decision making

Communication

- Explains and interprets events/ideas
- Describes and evaluates issues/problems/events
- Observes and compares people/data/things
- Compiles research

Career Snapshot: Museum Curator

A museum/art gallery curator acquires, cares for, develops, displays and interprets a collection of artifacts or works of art in order to inform, educate and entertain the public. The emphasis of the role is moving away from a purely academic research function towards a wider ranging career, which includes other aspects such as public relations, fundraising and handling inquiries. Curators do a variety of tasks including cataloguing acquisitions and keeping records, researching and writing catalogues, planning, organizing, interpreting and presenting exhibitions. Curators also plan financial budgets, supervise staff and/or volunteers and give presentations. Working hours are mainly nine to five, but extra hours may be necessary on occasions. Some posts may involve additional work to cover opening hours and evening meetings or other events. Jobs are widely available in mainly large towns and cities, although specialist museums exist in smaller towns and in rural areas. Demands such as meeting deadlines and complying with budgetary constraints may prove stressful. Generally, long-term career prospects are uncertain and flexibility, including geographical mobility, is necessary.

Career Snapshot: Archivist

Archivists preserve important objects, artifacts and documents. They plan and oversee the arrangement, cataloguing, and exhibition of collections including works of art, transcripts of meetings, photographs, coins and stamps, and historic objects. They also describe, catalogue, and analyze valuable objects for the benefit of researchers and the public and may coordinate educational and public outreach programs, such as tours, workshops, lectures, and classes, and may work with the boards of institutions to administer plans and policies. Archivists work at museums, governments, zoos, in the motion picture industry, colleges and universities, corporations, libraries and other institutions that require experts to preserve key records.

Additional Resources

U.S. Government's Occupational Outlook Handbook
<http://bls.gov/oco>

American Historical Association
www.historians.org

The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History
<http://www.gilderlehrman.org>

American Association for State and Local History
www.aaslh.org

Society for American Archaeology
www.saa.org

Museum Employment Recourse Center
www.museum-employment.com

The History Channel
www.history.com

Organization of American Historians
www.oah.org

New York Historical Society
www.nyhistory.org

Make the Difference
www.makingthedifference.org/federalcareers

Society of American Archivists
www.archivists.org