

ISHD-session: History Education and Public History

Organizers: Prof. Dr. Joanna Wojdon & Prof. Dr. Markus Furrer

Proposal:

Public history and history didactics are two subdisciplines of history that focus on reaching the world outside the academy. Both put an emphasis on “practicing” history while at the same time grounding practice on theoretical reflection and empirical research, with the ultimate goal of developing the most effective strategies of reaching diverse audiences to enhance historical knowledge and understanding. Both usually relate their areas of interest, their epistemologies and methodologies to “mainstream” historical research. The aim of our session is to refer these two subdisciplines to each other and encourage a conversation that will be beneficial to both as well as to the historical sciences in general.

At least at a first glance, the two subdisciplines often overlap with each other on various levels. Starting from the human factor: there are more than a handful researchers engaged in both (for example many of the authors of the “Public History Weekly”, an on-line blog-journal published by DeGruyter, come from the field of history didactics and conduct research on history education). Both history didactics and public history publications deal with such issues as historical understanding, historical consciousness and historical culture. They both work with museums and exhibitions, media and entertainment. However, their approaches differ in many cases. For example, while public history would focus on producing, and the quality of historical representation in video games or in historical feature films or in graphic novels, history didactics would concentrate on using them to effectively teach history. History didactics would examine historical concepts of the young people in order to check how close they are to existing academic models while public history explores those concepts in order to understand what particular choices are to be made in presenting the past to the public. In other words, young people’s historical concepts are the starting point for public history and the measure of effectiveness for history didactics.

The panel will bring together public historians, specialists in history education, and people who are active in both areas in order to discuss relationship between public history - doing history in public - and historical education; to "delimit borders" and find common areas between public history and history education in terms of some general concepts (such as historical consciousness), research areas, research questions, but also practices, such as how history museums work for education and for public history, and what professional competences each of the sub-disciplines foster that might be of mutual benefit.

Both theoretical reflections and practical examples “from the field(s)” will be welcome.

*Please send your proposal (max. 500 words) with title and contact details to the organizers:
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