

CAREERS FOR HISTORY MAJORS

Only a small percentage of history majors go on to be historians; most become businesspeople, curators, lawyers, librarians, politicians, researchers, teachers, and writers. Leaders in every field, from business to the arts, point to the advantages of historical study in fostering well-rounded intellectual development and building valuable career skills in researching, documenting, communicating and constructing logical, evidence-based arguments. With so many job options available, history majors should focus on the skills they have honed during their careers. Look for opportunities to speak with people who have jobs in fields that you are interested in entering and ask them about how to prepare yourself. It is never too early in your career to build a network of mentors who are willing to offer advice and guidance.

Career Related Skills

- **Research** -- the ability to understand past practices and policies and to trace the roots of any issue, to find new information which bears on that issue, and to incorporate that information into one's analysis of an issue.
- **Critical analysis** -- the ability to analyze a situation and come up with creative and practical solutions.
- **Interdisciplinary thinking** -- the ability to think about a problem in a variety of ways, analyze it using multiple tools, and provide solutions which draw from different traditions of thought.
- **Communication** -- the ability to communicate one's ideas effectively, especially in written form.

Common Careers Paths for History Majors

Educators: (*Elementary, secondary, postsecondary schools, historic sites and museums*)

Many history majors become educators, focusing on the communication of their ideas. Educators include teachers at all levels as well as those who work at historic sites and museums as docents, education directors, curators, guides, and interpreters. Others work as historical consultants, contract archivists, public historians, writers, and even filmmakers.

Researchers: (*Museums and historical organizations, cultural resource management, historic preservation, think tanks*)

Many history majors work as researchers, emphasizing their skills in evaluating and analyzing documentary evidence. Research positions include public historians as well as policy advisors, who serve as planners, evaluators, and policy analysts, often for state, local, and federal governments. Others find employment as researchers for museums and historical organizations or seek further training to work in cultural resources management or historic preservation.

Writers and Editors: (*Journalists, Documentary Editors, Producers of Multimedia Material*)

Because success as a history major depends upon learning to write effectively, many historians become writers and editors. They make their living as authors or as editors at a publishing house. Many historians become print and broadcast journalists, and others become documentary writers or editors.

Advocates: (*Lawyers and Paralegals, Litigation Support, Legislative Staff Work, Foundations*)

Many history majors end up in law school, since historians and lawyers often do roughly the same thing - they argue persuasively using historical data to support their arguments. Many become lawyers, paralegals, or gov't policymakers.

Businesspeople: (*Corporations, Contract Researchers, Nonprofit Associations*)

Most people overlook the value of a history major in preparing for a career in business. Yet, historians track historic trends, an important skill for those developing products to market or engaged in corporate or financial planning. Many history majors enter banking, insurance, and stock analysis. Historians also learn how to write persuasively, and this training gives them an edge in advertising, communications media, and marketing. Finally, many industries depend on an intimate knowledge of government policies and historical trends; thus, history majors have found their skills useful in extractive industries and in public utilities.