

“What Can I do With a Major in...History?”



A bachelor's degree in history provides training for any type of work where research, writing, analytical and communication skills are important.

Skills Possessed by History Majors

- Research and communication skills
- Skills in writing carefully reasoned reports and essays
- Ability to synthesize large amounts of information and draw conclusions
- Creativity
- Developing an analytical argument
- Reading and thinking critically
- Writing persuasively
- Understanding and interpreting the present and the past
- Knowledge of the history of various geographical areas and time periods

From the University of Manitoba's Student Counseling and Career Center website.

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Possible Jobs for History Majors



+ In the Private Sector:

*Business Analyst

Every successful business relies on employees who can use their research and analysis skills to review proposals, write corporate reports, manage employees. Employers like people who can think "outside the box". You may think that business majors have an edge, but liberal arts major, like history majors, bring a different perspective and a broader understanding of the world.

*Journalist

Research skills gained through training in history also provide a useful background for print, broadcast, or Internet journalism. Although historical subjects are not always the primary topics of research for journalists, the ability to use a variety of sources, to understand the necessity of verification, to think analytically, and to write clearly, is as important in journalism as in history. These skills are useful not only for those interested in investigative reporting and feature writing, but also for advertising and public relations professionals. As with many other occupations, however, a history background is usually not enough. Anyone with an interest in journalism should gain experience by working for the student newspaper or radio or television station while in college. Writing and editing for these media are the best ways to learn. This can be supplemented by additional course work in print or broadcast journalism.

*Archivist

Archivists constitute an important segment of the information management community. Archives are repositories for noncurrent records (in a variety of media) generated by individuals, institutions, groups, and governments and that are preserved because they contain information of historical value. Archivists are responsible for the establishment and maintenance of physical and intellectual control over the records in their care. As part of their work, they appraise documentation to determine its value, arrange and describe the material, refer for repair and preservation of the records as needed, and make the material available for users. Archivists can be found in government offices; educational, cultural and religious institutions; businesses; labor unions; hospitals; and community organizations. Each state has some type of official archives. In addition to the well-known National Archives, many federal agencies maintain archives for their own use. Entry-level positions generally require at least a B.A., more often an M.A. in history or a related social science, and a basic knowledge of archival skills.

*Records Manager

Records management is distinct from archival management. Records managers are concerned with the economical and efficient creation, use, and maintenance of the records of organizations as well as the disposition of these records. Most entry level positions require at least a BA and the more advanced positions will need a master's degree in library science or other field with specialized coursework in records management.

*Information Managers

Historians can make a significant contribution in this area, particularly when the information is historical. They can create and manage databases, verify documents, edit and publish, oversee public information, and undertake document research. The various positions in this field include: Library systems analysts who focus their attention on the development of both manual and mechanized library systems. Documentation specialists who are concerned with the flow of information, data field definitions, and the preparation of narrative descriptions for materials associated with databases. Business analysts who evaluate information systems with financial applications, develop appropriate systems, and focus on user needs and services. Online search specialists who concentrate primarily on user needs. Information researchers who conduct research in the field of information science and analyze the generation, storage, and transference of information.

*Librarian

Librarians comprise perhaps the most visible component of the information management community. They can be found in educational institutions, public libraries, historical societies, museums, state government, and business. In their different positions, librarians catalog and classify the different materials that enter the library; maintain a catalog (electronic or paper); prepare finding aids for the collection such as checklists and bibliographies; and generally assist users. Almost without exception, professional library positions demand a Master of Library Science degree (M.L.S.) from an institution accredited by the American Library Association. But several organizations and libraries do recruit persons holding high school diplomas and college degrees as library assistants and aides. A historical society, history museum, or research library undergraduate or graduate degree in history holds no particular advantage without an M.L.S. For those interested in both history and the library profession, a few graduate schools offer students the opportunity to complete both an M.A. and an M.L.S. degree.

*Writer and Editor/Publishing

Historians do a great deal of writing, but for some, writing is the primary responsibility. Historians often write for a variety of publications, including scholarly monographs; scripts for slide shows, films, and television shows; brochures for historic sites; captions for exhibits; reports for government agencies; testimony for legislative hearings; articles for mass-market magazines; textbooks; historical novels; and screenplays for television series and movies. The training a history major receives during the undergraduate program should be good preparation for most of these tasks. Historians can become editors rather than writers. Editors work for scholarly publishers, historical societies, journals, magazines, and trade publishers. A number of book editors were history majors in college; many have graduate degrees in the field. Editors must have very strong verbal and organizational skills, be able to pay attention to detail, and must be able to deal tactfully and persuasively with authors. Entry-level jobs are open to college graduates without special training in publishing, but those with coursework in editing and publishing are more likely to be hired.

*Publications Researcher

Researches story and script ideas; maintains research files on topics and people; checks stories for accuracy. Works for newspaper, magazine, or book publishers.

*Radio/Television Researcher

Researches story and script ideas for broadcast media. Maintains research files on topics and people; checks stories for accuracy. Works for radio and television producers.

*Film Researcher/Copywriter

Reviews scripts, checks for factual and technical accuracy, rewrites copy, assists in creating storyboard representations of scenes. Relevant course work or prior experience preferred. Works for entertainment, documentary, educational, and industrial film producers.

*Lawyers and Paralegals

In addition to providing experience in logical argumentation, history courses offer research, writing, and analytical skills necessary both for law school and the practice of law. Students of history wishing to become lawyers must, of course, be graduated from law school, but it is possible to become professional paralegal assistants with some training in this field.

*Litigation Support

Historians who are not lawyers can also play an important part in the legal process by providing litigation support research and serving as expert witnesses. This may require work on relatively simple issues, such as documenting a property line or providing genealogical research for a contested will, confirming the significance of a historic building in a case that determines the owner's right to tax credits, or researching cases with far reaching consequences, such as a major civil rights case.

*Preservation/Restoration Assistant

Conducts architectural, art, and urban historical research; applies technological and artistic conservation skills; researches related laws and tax issues. Works for specialized preservation services firms.

+In the Public Sector:

*Legislative Aide

Performs research, writing and liaison functions for a state or federal senator or congressional representative or for a municipal officeholder. Positions typically secured through direct contact with officeholder.

*Lobbying Researcher

Identifies information that can be used to support the positions and the efforts of lobbyists. Involves library research, attendance at conferences and committee meetings, and writing of reports. Employers include a diversity of special and public interest groups as well as professional lobbyists.

*Political Campaign Worker

Assists in planning, fund raising, research, writing issue statements, canvassing, and assessing voter attitudes. Works for candidates or interest groups during political election campaigns. Frequently leads to permanent positions with political organizations or officeholders.

*Urban Planning Research Assistant

Under the supervision of a city or regional planner, conducts research into the economic, environmental, and social consequences of development in order to support strategies for appropriate growth and renovation of rural, suburban, or urban areas. Typically works for a government agency. May work for a consulting or architectural firm.

*Think Tanks

Entry-level positions may be available sometimes in policy research organizations (colloquially referred to as think tanks) for history degree holders.

*Intelligence Officer

Researches and analyzes a diversity of geopolitical issues on behalf of the government. Employed by the Central Intelligence Agency or the National Security Agency.

+Historians as Educators:

*Historian

Historians research, analyze, and interpret the past. They use many sources of information in their research, including government and institutional records, newspapers and other

periodicals, photographs, interviews, films, and unpublished manuscripts such as personal diaries and letters. Historians usually specialize in a country or region, a particular period, or a particular field, such as social, intellectual, cultural, political, or diplomatic history. Other historians help study and preserve archival materials, artifacts, and historic buildings and sites.

*Historic Sites and Museums

The United States has numerous historic sites and museums ranging from large national museums to the small, local historical society collections. The National Park Service is responsible for approximately 350 parks, battlefields, monuments, and sites around the country, almost all of which have some cultural resources to be interpreted. Educators are needed at such sites to interpret the past to visitors with a wide range of education and experience. Those who teach at museums and historic sites may need more than traditional history courses to qualify for their positions. Courses in art history, folklore, and archeology may prove useful training for work at a museum or historic site. In a small museum, the education specialist may also have some responsibilities for exhibit preparation and collections management. In this case, specialized museum courses are invaluable. In large museums, there is a distinct difference between curators, who are responsible for the collections, and exhibit specialists, who design the exhibits.

*Elementary Schools

Apart from having a strong motivation to teach very young children, students of history interested in teaching in elementary schools (grades K--6) must take a wide range of courses, including anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science, and sociology in preparation for certification by the state to teach social studies. They also must take a general studies curriculum required of all teachers of grades K--6; this includes introductory courses in English, music and art, science, history, and geography, as well as specialized courses in math, physical education, and teaching techniques. Those interested in teaching at the elementary level should consult the education department of a local college or university or officials in the state in which they hope to teach for further guidance and to determine additional requirements.

*Secondary Schools

There are more opportunities to teach history as a separate subject (rather than being a part of social studies) at the junior high and high school levels. Thus more history courses are required of a student majoring in secondary education. A broad background would be required to teach topics like world history, or Western Civilization.

*Postsecondary Education: Community and Junior Colleges, Four-Year Colleges, and Universities

A history major will be good preparation for obtaining the advanced degrees (MA or PhD) required to teach at the postsecondary level.

*The content was adopted from the following websites: <http://www.historians.org/pubs/free/careers/index.htm>, <http://www.bls.gov>, and <http://www.utexas.edu/student/careercenter/careers/history.pdf>

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Career Resources for History Majors



Specific Resources

American Historical Association: <http://www.historians.org/>

Humanities and Social Sciences Job Guide: <http://www.h-net.org/jobs>

National Council on Public History: <http://www.ncph.org/>

Organization of American Historians: <http://www.woah.org/>

Versatility of History Degree: http://money.cnn.com/2000/08/11/career/q_degreehistory/

General Resources

***CareerSearch:** <http://www.careersearch.net/Hofstra>
(username-hofstra, password-career)

Occupational Outlook Handbook: <http://www.bls.gov/oco>

Riley Guide: <http://www.rileyguide.com>

***Spotlight On Careers:** <http://www.spotlightoncareers.org>
(username-lacn, password-holland)

***Vault:** http://www.vault.com/cb/careerlib/careerlib_main.jsp?parrefer=6123
(You will be prompted for your Novell username and password)

*These websites require you sign in using a username and password.

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Famous History Majors

U.S. Presidents

Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt,
Richard Nixon, George W. Bush

Politics

W.E.B. DuBois – Co-Founder of the NAACP
Newt Gingrich – Former Speaker of the House

Athletes

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar – Former Professional Basketball Player
Ken Dryden - Former NHL Goaltender
Jackie Joyner-Kersey – Retired American Olympic Medalist (track & field)
Grant Hill – Current NBA Player

Media

Chris Berman – Sportscaster
Wolf Blitzer – Journalist, Author, CNN Reporter
Seymour Hersh – Pulitzer Prize Winner, Investigative Journalist, Author

Business

Martha Stewart – Business Tycoon, Homemaking Advocate
Carly Fiorina – Former CEO of Hewlett-Packard, Contributor on Fox Business Network
Lee Iacocca – Industrialist, Former CEO of Chrysler, Author
Patricia Russo - CEO of Lucent Technologies

Entertainment

Katharine Hepburn – Iconic Actress (film, television, stage)
Conan O'Brien – Emmy Award winning TV host and TV writer
Lauryn Hill – Singer, Rapper, Musician, Record Producer, Film Actress
Steve Carell – Comedian, Actor, Producer, Writer
Edward Norton – Film Actor and Director
Jimmy Buffett – Singer, Songwriter, Author, Businessman, Film Producer
Janeane Garofalo – Comedian, Actress, Political Activist
Sacha Noam Baron Cohen - Borat
Ananda Lewis – MTV VJ

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