



Social History Curators Group

Transforming social history in museums

Social History Curators Group
Conference 2020

Challenging Social History: Navigating difficulties and caring for contested collections

National Civil War Centre, Newark-on-Trent and
National Justice Museum, Nottingham

Thursday 25th June and Friday 26th June 2020

Call for contributions

SHCG would like to receive proposals of activities, round table discussions, presentations, and workshops on the theme of challenging social history in museums and how to navigate, curate and interpret difficulties in social history collections.

Guidance on Topics for Discussion

The museum sector continues to face great challenges in 2020. We are looking again at our collections to find hidden histories traditionally left out by past narratives. We increasingly turn to partnership working to enhance our knowledge, open up collections and access essential funding.

- How do pressures on museum staff affect the way we interpret history?
- How do we manage visitor, staff and stakeholder expectations of social history collections; what happens when a story/audience isn't represented?
- How do we foster a sense of ownership between staff and users?
- How do we look after our own health and well-being when working with contested collections or stories?

The SHCG Conference 2020 aims to address these difficulties in an open and honest way and provide guidance and advice. We look forward to hearing from colleagues in the sector who have interpreted difficult histories, navigated partnerships and dealt with funding cuts, and how they managed the situation, successful or not.

Some example ideas are below:

- Health and Well-being
 - How do we look after ourselves when constantly pushing boundaries with fewer resources?
 - How does a lack of resources affect our well-being and productivity?
 - What support do staff interpreting difficult or contested histories need to protect their own well-being?
- Partnerships Working
 - How are outcomes affected when a partnership doesn't go as planned?
 - How do experiences differ between large and small organisations?
 - What can academic partnerships add to our existing knowledge and skill set?
- Difficult Histories & Interpreting Consciously and Ethically
 - How do we present difficult and challenging histories to the wider general public in an honest way?
 - Do we need to safeguard visitors when communicating difficult histories?
 - How do we acknowledge the past, and present objects in a new light?
 - What should museum staff consider when presenting difficult subjects to audiences?

Curatorial Conundrums - quick fire round

We are pleased to provide the opportunity for 6 delegates to propose a problem, question or experience of a project to discuss with conference delegates. The presentation should be a 3-minute summary of a collections problem, project overview, or tricky question which will then lead to a facilitated discussion session. This workshop is aimed at giving delegates practical advice and guidance on how to (or how not to) tackle issues in different areas of museum practice and at different career levels. In order to encourage honest dialogue this proposal can be anonymous; SHCG committee can provide a person to read a statement on behalf of a delegate. Please submit your ideas, which must relate to the theme of representation, using the application form at the end of this document.

Conference 2020

This year, SHCG is looking for presentations or interactive workshops that relate to the topics outlined above. The more thought provoking, unusual, practical and insightful, the better.

If you have an idea that you think might be appropriate for this conference, please submit it as we'll read and review every application. Insights into how others are working, their successes, their challenges and best practice are of benefit to many others within the wider museum, heritage and cultural sector. We welcome contributions which pose difficult questions and are keen to hear from projects which might not have gone as planned or were considered unsuccessful in their outcomes - SHCG wants to create a space for honest dialogue and problem solving. SHCG is keen to hear from **anyone** working within social history in museums and heritage sites, **not only those in curatorial positions**.

Contributors are invited to offer perspectives from a local, national or international context. SHCG is keen to accept more contributions that stem from thinking 'outside the box' and will allow delegates to reflect on and think about Social History curation and its future.

Dates for your diary

- Please complete the submission form below and return it to Lauren Ryall-Waite and Alison Grange (conferenceshcg@gmail.com) by **7th February 2020**.
- All applicants will be notified of the Conference Organisers' decision by **28th February 2020**.
- Conference will be held on **Thursday 25th June** and **Friday 26th June 2020**.

Terms and conditions

The decision of the conference panel is final.

- Only ONE person from each presentation or workshop submission will be given a free day delegate place for the day that they are speaking.
- Speakers for the Quick Fire Round DO NOT qualify for a free place on the day they are speaking.
- Speakers travel costs will be reimbursed at standard fare-rate booked by a deadline specified by the SHCG Trustees, to a maximum of £120. This does not include 'Curatorial Conundrums' speakers. We require any speakers eligible to receive reimbursement to make arrangements which are as cost-effective as possible, for example, taking advantage of early booking offers and using railcards.
- Please note that SHCG is unable to provide additional fees, subsistence costs or accommodation for speakers.

The Social History Curators Group is a membership organisation dedicated to improving the status and provision of social history in museums and the standards of collections, research, display and interpretation. It is not solely for curators, but for anyone working with or interested in social history in arts, museums and heritage.

Our annual conference is open to all and aims to facilitate the sharing of skills and experiences, and provoke debate around a current theme affecting our members and colleagues through presentations, interactive workshops and tours.

For more information, please visit www.shcg.org.uk

SHCG Conference 2020 Proposal Form

NAME	
ORGANISATION	
EMAIL ADDRESS	
PHONE NUMBER	
<i>Please indicate how you would like to participate:</i>	
Curatorial Conundrum (3 mins) plus group discussion. If you wish to submit anonymously, please indicate this	
Case study presentation (20 mins)	
Interactive workshop (45 mins)	
Other format idea: please specify	
Please tell us why you believe your paper should be included in the SHCG Conference 2020 (100 words max)	

Abstract, clearly indicating which theme or themes your paper will explore, and how it will explore it/them. What do you expect delegates to learn from your session? (300 words max)

Short biography of proposed speaker/s (100 words max)

Return to Alison Grange and Lauren Ryall-Waite at conferenceshcg@gmail.com by **7th February 2020**. If you have a proposal which you'd like to talk through with us before the submission deadline, do contact either of us individually.

Lauren

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Alison

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