

Every Museum a Civic Museum

Sarah Jencks, Founder and Principal

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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Every Museum a Civic Museum, Founder and Principal, Oct 2023 - Present

Consulting practice to support museums, historic sites, and other educational and cultural organizations in defining their interpretive strategies, with a special focus on incorporating education and civic strategy. Experience working with descendant communities and facilitating shifts to interpreting and teaching whole histories.

- Develop and support development of educational and interpretive materials and programs for museums.
- Offer professional development workshops in the learning science of play and civic strategy.
- Serve as co-chair for the Community Learning Partners task force of Educating for American Democracy, a NEH-funded, trans-partisan initiative to develop a roadmap for excellence in civics and history learning.
- Clients include: Thinking Nation, King's Chapel, Preservation Maryland, Made By Us, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, The Montpelier Foundation, Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, Lincoln Presidential Foundation, International Coalition of Sites of Conscience

Team Lead, Museum Learning, History Co:Lab, Jul 2022 - Sep 2023

Built capacity among museum professionals and educators to activate their organizations at hubs of civic learning by developing civic strategy and integrating the latest learning science into their existing pedagogies. Wove networks of museum, democracy, and learning professionals to strengthen our democratic practices. Worked within community ecosystems to prototype weaving these networks in Kansas City and Pittsburgh. Co-led a network of museums, historical and cultural organizations investigating ways to leverage the Educating for American Democracy roadmap, design challenges and inquiry principles in order to build a common vocabulary, activate capacities for civic engagement, and bridge divides between the public history, democracy and "future of school" fields.

Director of Education and Interpretation, Ford's Theatre Society, Jul 2007 – Mar 2022

Created the position of Director of Education, growing the department from a team of one to 21 full-time and part-time staff. Added interpretation to portfolio in 2013 and exhibitions in 2016. Member of Ford's Theatre Society's executive team, overseeing educational, interpretive, and public programming for a \$16M historic site, museum, producing theater, and National Park Service partner that reaches 1M people through on-site and virtual programming annually. Oversee programs that reach: 20,000 students, teachers, and lifelong learners with deeply compelling and educational programs both onsite and online; 190,000 more through accessible online resources; and 500,000 onsite visitors through dialogic exhibitions in self-guided site visits. Developed and operationalized numerous programs and initiatives, including the Ford's Theatre Approach to Teaching Oratory, multiple summer teacher institutes, in-school and virtual teaching artist residencies, teen podcasting program;

commissioned history plays, historical walking tours and carefully designed virtual historical content focused on first-person accounts and social history.

Key Accomplishments at FTS:

- Serve as member of leadership team of seven for almost fourteen years, including supporting two **strategic planning processes**; **co-leading website redesign**; contributing to yearly **budget creation and management** (with direct management of ~ \$1M in staff and programs); participating in re-branding process; **managing board committee**; active role in **corporate, foundation and individual fundraising strategy and cultivation**.
- Led team through almost 24 months of pandemic programming that have included: taking all programs from in-person to virtual; **increasing our virtual programs reach by 400%**; expanding virtual program reach to incorporate life-long learners, making up almost 50% of audience; and developing two series of resource videos to teach elements of the Ford's Theatre approach to teaching oratory.
- In advance of Ford's Theatre National Historic Site's planned museum expansion in 2023, led a **complete reimagining of visitor experience and new interpretation of a site of race-based political violence and national memory**. Partnered with the National Park Service and Smithsonian Exhibitions to re-envision exhibitions for the launch of a new visitor experience across four buildings. Led IMLS-funded rapid prototyping initiative (2017-19) to improve the student group visitor experience in museum galleries.
- **Spear-headed institutional change centering equity and inclusion**, project managing a partnership with the Empathetic Museum, through IMLS Museums Empowered grant (2020-22).
- Using International Coalition of Sites of Conscience practices, **led an institutional interpretive planning process** that resulted in a comprehensive interpretive plan (2018) in partnership with the National Park Service that focused on why and how its buildings have embodied national grief and memory of political violence over 150 years.
- **Facilitate the board's Education Committee**, a group of high-profile local and national philanthropists dedicated to expanding the reach of Ford's Theatre programs and elevating innovative public history practice.
- Developed a strong **track record of grantsmanship**, writing and receiving four IMLS grants; two NEH grants; and writing U.S. Department of Education Arts Education grant. Provide ongoing counsel to the development department for a number of education-focused foundation grants.
- Led co-creation of the **Ford's Theatre Approach to Teaching Oratory** with ~50 teachers from across the country over eight years, including a web platform, videos, posters, and workshops taught by teacher consultants in their own communities. Developed a program with summer and school-year components to build skills around using oratory in the classroom and create a robust, teacher-driven professional learning community via videoconference. Project was independently evaluated through an IMLS-funded, multi-year grant.
- To expand the quality of instruction about the Civil War and Reconstruction, established **week-long summer teacher institutes** with partners from seven historic sites across DC, including Frederick Douglass NHS, President Lincoln's Cottage, the National Mall and

Memorial Parks, Arlington House, and Clara Barton Missing Soldiers' Office. Recognized by NEH Landmarks in History grant for Reconstruction Institute and Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources grant for Civil War Washington. IMLS funding supported two-year evaluation through a partnership with the George Washington University School of Education.

- Co-led creation of an **institutional digital strategy** (2014-15) to reach those unable to visit the site in person. Pioneered long-term teaching artist residencies with underserved districts across the country using video-conferencing strategies (2011).
- To increase accessibility to new and different audiences, spear-headed development of historical and educational digital content on www.fords.org. Conceived of and managed creation of **crowd-sourced Remembering Lincoln microsite** to interpret public responses to the Lincoln assassination from around the world. Received IMLS funding for the project, which was recognized by AAM MUSE award and the AASLH Leadership in History award.

Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Green Hedges School, Vienna, VA, 2004-2007

Oversaw inquiry-based professional development plan focused on differentiated instruction for a small, progressive independent school. Supervised and facilitated investigation of new reading and math initiatives. Taught social studies, English and drama for grades 6, 7, 8, and advised middle school.

History Teacher, Upper School, Beaver Country Day School, Chestnut Hill, MA 2003–2004
Taught United States History; Twentieth Century History; World History; and Boston history.

Director, Professional Development, Empire State Partnerships, New York, NY, 1999–2002

Directed state-wide professional development initiative supporting NYS Council on the Arts and the NYS Education Department. Provided capacity building experiences for teachers, artists, and administrators from 60 + cultural/school partnerships. Supervised staff of six and \$500,000 budget.

Studio Program Manager, Urban Arts Partnership, New York, NY, 1997–1999

Supervised 11 teaching artists and served as program publicist and development assistant for intensive school/arts education partnership funded through Empire State Partnerships (New York State Council on the Arts) and the New York City Center for Arts Education.

EDUCATION

Harvard Graduate School of Education, Ed.M., School Leadership Program (2003)

Brown University, A.B., American Civilization (1996)

Acumen Academy Online Certificates, Human-Centered Design (2017), Systems Thinking (2019); Coursework, Social Entrepreneurship (2021)

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE AND AFFILIATIONS

Board Member, National Council for History Education, 2022 - Present
CEO Hiring Committee; Governance Committee

Member, The National Civic Collaboratory, 2022 - Present
Participate three times a year in a cross-sector “mutual aid” meeting convened by Eric Liu to build capacity for strengthening our democracy

Board Member, Literacy InterActives, 2021 – Present
Volunteer consultant and board member for a small historic preservation and history education non-profit in southern Virginia working to restore a Reconstruction-era cabin owned for more than 100 years by a free Black family and engage the community in conversations about local Black history, and Reconstruction and Jim Crow in Virginia.

State Commission Assessor, National Endowment for the Humanities, 2024
One of two assessors for Nevada Humanities’ five-year assessment.

Grant Panelist, Institute for Museum and Library Services, 2022 & 2024
Museum National Leadership Challenge Grants, Round 2; Museums for America, Round 1

Committee Chair/Member, American Association of State and Local History, 2013 – Present
History Advocacy Working Group (Chair, 2022-Present); Education and Interpretation (Chair, October 2020–2022); Annual Meeting Programming (Co-Chair, 2022; Member, 2017-2018); Presidential Sites and Libraries (2015–2016)

Co-Founder, Muse Women’s Leadership Collective, 2018 - Present
Meet weekly with 12 women in top museum and public history leadership across the country, focusing on management, equity and inclusion, and leadership development

Co-Founder, Teacher InSites Working Group, 2019 – 2023
Convened museums and historic site educators virtually and regularly to consider strategy, collaboration and collective impact in teacher professional development programs. Partnered with College of William and Mary to offer Revolutionary Education convening on teaching history in politicized times, October 2022.

Instigator and Co-Leader, Museum Rapid Response Planning, 2020 – 2022
In collaboration with the National Conference on Citizenship, organized training for 30 museum facilitators and created Scenario Planning workshop for 300 online museum participants to create regional and local plans for possible scenarios in response to the 2020 election and the January 6 insurrection in the U.S. Capitol.

Steering Committee, EdCom Professional Network, American Alliance of Museums, 2017 – 2023

At-Large Member, Professional Development; Past Chair, Communications; Chair, Leadership Development

Co-Founder, Civil War Washington Consortium, 2009 – 2021

Sites in DC, MD, and VA collaborate on programming to elevate interpretation of the urban experience of the Civil War

Grant Panelist, National Endowment for the Humanities, 2019

Infrastructure and Capacity-Building Challenge Grants

Board Member, D.C. Arts & Humanities Education Collaborative, 2008 – 2013

Vice President (2009 – 2011); Chair, Teaching Artist Professional Development (2007 – 2008)

PUBLICATIONS, PRESENTATIONS & PANELS

Thinking Historically About... "The State of Social Studies Education," Podcast Guest, Thinking Nation, Zachary Coté, February 2024.

"The Value in Evaluation," *The Historic Site Teacher Professional Development Handbook*, Lora Cooper, ed., 2022, Rowman and Littlefield.

"Changing the Educational Landscape: School & Museum Partnerships for the 21st Century," Co-Author with Veronica Alvarez, Catherine Awsumb Nelson, Elizabeth Gerber. *Educating for the Future: Museum Education in the 21st Century*, Jason Porter and Mary Kay Cunningham, eds., 2022, Rowman and Littlefield.

Pod-Textualizing the Past, "Traveling through the 1820's," Podcast Guest, Susan J. Stanfield, PhD, September 2022.

An Infinite Loop: Democracy, Museums and Rapid Response, Co-Author with Kayleigh Bryant-Greenwell and Caroline Klibanoff, MASS Action blog post, May 24, 2021.

"Memorializing Lincoln's Life Where He Died," Co-Author, *Affective Architectures: More-than-Representational Geographies of Heritage*, ed. Jacqui Micieli-Voutsinas and Angela M. Person, 2020, Routledge. Co-Author,

"Connecting Theory and Practice: Using Place-Based Learning in Teacher Professional Development," Co-Author with Maia Sheppard, Karen Kortecamp, Jake Flack & Alexandria Wood (2019), *Journal of Museum Education*, 44:2, 187-200, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10598650.2019.1597598>

International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, 2021

Instigator, shared dialogic programming experience with international membership

Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums, 2023

Presenter, conference sessions:

- Playful learning in museum exhibitions, with Kristin Scarola and Rebecca Shulman

American Association of State and Local History, 2010 – Present

Convener (2021), annual meeting “thought leader” sessions on civic engagement (general session) and civic learning (concurrent session) in public history institutions

Presenter, conference sessions:

- Civics Education Isn’t Partisan! Visitor Attitudes toward Civics Content (2024)
- Seizing the Post-Pandemic Moment with Playful Learning (2023)
- Civic strategy in history museums: Gen Z and K12 (2022)
- Communities of practice for professional growth (2021)
- Understanding and measuring collective impact in museum education (2018)
- Research on summer teacher institutes (2018)
- Gen X careers and cultivating a diverse leadership pipeline (2016)
- Crowdsourcing digital history initiatives (2015)
- Interpreting sites of national tragedy (2014)
- Programming for middle age (2014)
- Distance learning (2013)
- Broadening program reach through institutional partnerships (2013)
- Attracting new visitors to historic houses (2012)

American Alliance of Museums, 2016 - Present

Convener, Future of Museums Virtual Summit:

- Every Museum a Civic Museum panel discussion (2023)

Presenter, Annual Meeting Sessions:

- Educating for American Democracy: Building a Museum Toolkit (2024)
- Educator to CEO: What We Bring to the C-Suite (2024)
- Why Your Museum Needs a Civic Strategy (2023)
- Educating for American Democracy workshop (2022)
- EdCom awards and related EdCom programming (2018 - 2021)
- Practical approaches to digital strategy planning in mid-sized cultural organizations (2016)

National Council for History Education, 2009 - Present

Presenter, Annual Meeting:

- The future of history learning is playful learning (2023)
- Using museum and performance teaching methods to strengthen history learning, presented with President Lincoln’s Cottage, Tudor Place Historic House and Garden, and Frederick Douglass National Historic Site (2011)
- Teaching the presidency, presented with George Washington’s Mount Vernon (2009)

National Council for the Social Studies

Presenter, Annual Meeting

- Embedding civic and history learning in community: building tools to integrate Educating for American Democracy into your teaching practice (2023)

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation & Improvement

Presenter, Teaching American History conference session:

- Teaching history through oratory (2009)

National Endowment for the Humanities, 2004 – 2007

Curriculum reviewer, online history units for inclusion in the NEH EdSitement website

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

AAM MUSE award (Bronze) for the Remembering Lincoln microsite in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of Lincoln's assassination, <http://rememberinglincoln.fords.org>, 2016

AASLH Leadership in History Award for the Remembering Lincoln microsite in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of Lincoln's assassination, <http://rememberinglincoln.fords.org>, 2016

Japan Fulbright Memorial Fund Teacher Fellow, selected for delegation of American teachers to study Japanese culture and education for four weeks in Japan, summer 2005

Susan Steinhardt Award for Service to the Theatre Department, Brown University, 1996