What Do You Do With An M.A. In Historic Preservation?

A Handbook and Guide to Jobs and Careers
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Jobs and Careers Part I: Preservation Planning and Administration

This employment category is interrelated with the following historical research and evaluation category. Professionals in the present field are primarily concerned with the planning and administration of preservation programs, providing technical support to the community and attending public meetings. Positions in this category are typically more office based and require more interpersonal skills than the following category.

Typically, employers are state and local government agencies, including historic preservation offices and nonprofit organizations.

Duties may include:

* Development and implementation of historic preservation and historic zoning programs
* Identifying and evaluating historic resources
* Processing applications for historic property designation
* Providing technical assistance to the community and attending public meetings
* Coordinating government programs with community groups

Skills and experience that employers may be looking for may include:

* Writing and communication skills, especially interpersonal skills
* Organizational skills, computer database management
* Ability to interpret architectural plans and surveys
* Knowledge of federal and local regulations

Courtesy of the Savannah College of Art and Design Architectural History Blog
Examples of jobs that fall under this category include:

**Compliance Officer**

Compliance officers are responsible for ensuring that historical sites and programs are operating within the standards set by legal and expert authorities. They will also provide technical assistance and advising on projects that may affect historic properties, sites, and programs.

General Qualifications for Compliance Officers:

- Knowledge and understanding of federal historic preservation regulations
- Experience identifying and evaluating historic properties for eligibility for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places and analyzing effects to those properties, especially historic structures and landscapes
- Experience writing or reviewing Cultural Resources Assessment Surveys, case Studies, and environmental documents
- Operational familiarity, knowledge, and understanding of Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- Ability to work comfortably within a computer network environment
- The ability to closely work together in a team environment with other historic preservation professionals and demonstrate good interpersonal communication skills
- The ability to frequently work with professionals in other agencies to ensure timely, efficient, and effective project reviews
- Effective verbal and written communication skills

**Field Representative**

Field representatives serve to represent local, statewide, and national organizations and agencies in order to garner and strengthen support for historical preservation programs. Field representatives will assess historical preservation needs at the local, state, and national level, advise on solutions and strategies for local issues, and provide resources for the preservation community.

General Qualifications for Field Representatives:

- Minimum education requirements: a Bachelor’s in historic preservation or a related field OR a Master’s degree in historic preservation or a related field
- Excellent communication, public speaking, and interpersonal skills
• Experience in the historic preservation field, creating networks, knowledge of the historic preservation strategies, experience in community development and interaction with community leaders

• Related experience including planning, organizational development, real estate, funding/financing, and public policy

• Working knowledge of the preservation networks in local area

• Ability to use a computer

**Neighborhood Planner**

This is a specialized professional planning position with primary work assignments focused on the areas of historic preservation, neighborhood planning and urban design. Neighborhood planners administer work plans for historic preservation and urban development projects as well as reviewing design plans to ensure that they meet state and federal standards. They will also be responsible for updating and maintaining city maps and blueprints. They also serve a liaison between neighborhood groups and the local government.

General Qualifications for Neighborhood Planner:

• Minimum education requirements: a Master’s in historic preservation, city or regional planning, architecture, engineering, environmental studies, public administration, or a related field.

• 3-5 years of experience in municipal planning, historic preservation, or a related field.

**Preservation Planner**

Preservation planners work on efforts of preserve and protect the cultural resources of a local area. They provide consultations and advice on historical preservation projects as well as provide assistance to local authorities.

General Qualifications for Preservation Planners:

• Minimum Education Requirements: a Bachelor’s degree plus two years experience in historic preservation is required, however, a Master’s degree and additional experience highly desirable

• Strong verbal and written communication and interpersonal skills

• Working knowledge of state and federal regulations pertaining to historic preservation planning, architectural history, and cultural and landscape resources
Program Administrators

Program administrators are responsible for oversight the staff and programs of historical preservation organizations and agencies. They provide technical assistance and services to other preservation organizations, government agencies, nonprofits, businesses, and even the general public. They organize training workshops and conferences on historic preservation practices and principles. They conduct projects, research, and oversee federal and state tax credit programs.

General Qualifications for Program Administrators:

- Minimum education requirements: a Master’s degree in anthropology, archeology, architectural history, architecture, historic preservation, history, or in a related field
- Four years minimum professional experience in Historic Preservation

Project Manager

Project managers are responsible for the strategic planning, development and reporting, budget tracking, cooperative agreement, and contact administrations, and overall office management responsibilities. In addition to these responsibilities, project managers are responsible for fundraising and pursuing other forms of funding. They will responsible for organizing workshops and conferences and developing guidelines, principles and other resources for historic preservationists.

General Qualifications for Project Managers:

- Strong verbal and written communication and interpersonal skills
- Experience in budgeting, administration, and workshop organization
- Ability to use a computer
- Working knowledge in heritage development, historic preservation, grant writing, fundraising, nonprofit management, and/or in related fields
- 3-5 years of professional experience in program and project management in the historic preservation and heritage development

Restoration Supervisor

Restoration supervisors are responsible for the supervision and administration of restoration programs. They provide technical assistance, education, and outreach for local and regional historic preservation commissions and government agencies.
General Qualifications for Restoration Supervisors:

- Minimum education requirements: Bachelor’s in history, planning, architectural history or a closely related field and five years of experience in historic preservation OR a Master’s degree in historic preservation, planning, architectural history, or a closely related field and four years of progressive experience in historic preservation

- Working knowledge of the policies, procedures and operations of national, state, and local historic preservation programs

- Ability to comprehend technical language and concepts pertaining to architecture and the preservation of historic buildings and districts

- Good written and verbal communications and interpersonal skills

- Ability to comprehend legal and technical language and concepts
This field is the counterpart to preservation planning and administration, above. It involves completing field surveys, conducting research and completing the reports reviewed by state and local government agencies. Compared to preservation planning and administration this field is less office oriented, requiring more on-site work and travel.

Typically, employers are architectural firms, cultural resource firms and government agencies.

Duties include:

* Site investigation and documentation
* Archival research on historic structures
* Writing reports and applications for historic designation
* Ensuring compliance with federal and local regulations
* Often includes some travel

Skills and experience:

* Research and writing skills
* Photography skills
* Surveying/rendering skills
* Knowledge of federal and local regulations

Courtesy of the Savannah College of Art and Design Architectural History Blog

Examples of jobs that fall under this category include:

**Architects**

Architects review, monitor, survey, and evaluate historical sites and properties while providing technical assistance to historic preservation organizations, government agencies, and the general public on local and national projects. They must evaluate the integrity and appropriateness of design plans in restorations and other projects.

General Qualifications for Architects:

- Professional degree in architecture or a state license to practice architecture and a minimum of 5 years of experience in preservation and restoration
- Working knowledge in federal historic preservation programs as well as basic knowledge in regional and American architectural development and technology
- Strong verbal and written communication and interpersonal skills
- Willing to travel

**Conservator**

Conservators are responsible for the examination, documentation, preservation, and restoration of objects and collections of historic relevance and value. They manage the work, the budget, and the completion of conservation projects as well as providing training and policy material for other conservationists.

General Qualifications for Conservators:

- Minimum education requirements: Bachelor’s degree in archaeology, anthropology, or a related field as well as a Master’s degree or equivalent training in conservation and field experience
- Training in health and safety or hazmat management, close up color digital photography, light polarizing microscopy, and Microsoft Office applications
Disaster Specialist

Disaster specialists work closely with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA,) Department of Homeland Security (DHS,) and other government agencies related to disaster response and recovery assignments. Because they will be work closely with government agencies, disaster specialists are required to undergo a background clearance check.

General Qualifications for Disaster Specialists:

• Minimum education requirement: a Bachelor’s degree and five years experience OR a Master’s degree and experience in engineering, geotechnics, construction, geology, architecture, historic preservation, urban and general city planning, physical geography, environmental science, or in a related field.

Historian

Historians survey, research, review federal and state projects regarding historical and architectural sites. They provide technical assistance and advice regarding these projects, as well as ensuring that all projects follow state and federal regulations and guidelines. They survey and inspect sites to identify problems and solutions as well as suggestions for restoration and rehabilitation, if needed.

General Qualifications for Historians:

• Strong verbal and written communication skills
• Working knowledge of American and regional history and architectural history
• Working knowledge in technical, legal, and historic resources, and management practices and procedures in architectural history and historic buildings
• Ability in planning and assessing historical and cultural structures

Preservationist

Preservationists are responsible for the management of the National Register of Historic Places as well as conducting surveys of historic preservation sites and places. They act as a liaison between the general public and the National Register of Historic Preservation, responding to public inquiries about historic preservation and nominations for the National Register. They also provide education and training opportunities on inventory and registration processes for the National Register.

General Qualifications for Preservationists:
• Minimum education requirement: Master’s in history, architectural history, or a closely related preservation field, or and equivalent in education and experience with a minimum of four years work experience
• Strong verbal and written communication skills
• Ability to use Microsoft Office and Window-based applications
• Ability to implement, plan, and critically evaluate research
• Ability to review, understand, and interpret technical data involving architectural and engineering drawings

**Preservation Officer**

Preservation officers research and analyze any and all issues related to planning and preservation issues. They work in conjunction with other planners, developers, and the general public to ensure that guidelines, regulations, and ordinances are being followed in regards to historic preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation projects. They also act as liaison between the public and the local government to ensure that all permits have been completed as well as the approval of design plans.

**General Qualifications for Preservation Officers:**

• Minimum education requirements: Bachelor’s in urban planning, urban design, or historic preservation with two years of experience or a Master’s in urban planning, urban design, or historic preservation with two years of experience.

• Must have working knowledge of the basic principles, concepts, and procedures of municipal planning.

**Specialist**

Specialists work to educate the public on historical and cultural resource preservation and the rules and regulations concerning preservation practices and principles. They also assist with nominations and final documentation of sites and places for the National Register of Historic Preservation.

**Qualifications for Specialists:**

• Working knowledge of historic preservation regulations and standards of state and federal preservation laws and principles of historical building survey in regards to nominations for the National Register of Historical Places

• Working knowledge of regional history, geography, architectural history, and historic preservation.
• Working knowledge of grant writing and planning concepts
• Ability to operate photographic equipment
• Ability to use a computer
• Strong verbal and written communication and interpersonal skills
• Ability to appraise and determine the historical and architectural value of buildings and sites
Jobs and Careers Part III:
Historic Site Management and Curatorship
This field is analogous with museum curatorship but often includes aspects of historical research and evaluation, above and/or historic foundation management and administration, below:

Typically, employers are local governments or private, nonprofit organizations.

Duties include:
* Management of volunteers and staff
* Development of educational programs
* Research and documentation
* Collections management
* Public presentations

Skills and experience:
* Museum experience/knowledge of museum practices
* Documentation and research skills
* Knowledge of history and historic furnishings
* Public speaking skills
* Supervisory skills

Examples of jobs that fall under this category include:

**Curator**

Curators are responsible for the planning, construction, and display of exhibits in museums and historical sites. They keep records and reports of the activities of the museum or site as well as records for programming and inventory within in the location. They are also responsible for the scheduling and conduction of tours and presentations as well as for the assignment and education of tour guides.

General Qualifications for Curators:
* Minimum education requirement: a Bachelor’s in history, anthropology, archaeology, art history, cultural geography, museum studies, historic preservation, historical geography, or in a related field
Executive Director

The executive director is responsible for the overall operation of a historic site or museum. They are responsible for preservation of the items in the facilities collections and the actual site, the development of education programming, special presentations and tours, and for the maintenance of budgets, risk management procedures, and overall care of the museum or site.

General Qualifications for Executive Directors:

- Minimum education requirement: a Master’s in historic preservation, architectural history, architecture, or in a related field as well as three to five years of experience in historic preservation or a related field
- Working knowledge of project development and management
- Working knowledge of historic construction techniques, tools, material, and historic research
- Strong verbal and written communication and interpersonal skills
- Ability to use a computer

Preservation Outreach Educator

Preservation outreach educators are responsible for the planning and implementation of educational outreach programs. They work closely with curators to development programs to work in conjunction with collections on exhibit.

General Qualifications for Preservation Outreach Educators:

- Minimum education requirements: a Bachelor’s degree in historic preservation, American history, archaeology, or in a related field with three years of related experience OR a Master’s in historic preservation, American history, archaeology or in a related field with one year of related experience
- Working knowledge of historic preservation principles
- Strong technical writing and presentation skills.
- Ability to use a computer
Program Coordinator

Program coordinators are responsible for outreach education through the use of publications, presentations, websites, and workshops open to the public. This job is similar to preservation outreach educators, however, they can also provide technical assistance to individuals and organizations planning and working on historic preservation projects.

General Qualifications for Program Coordinators:

- Minimum education requirement: a Bachelor’s degree in history, historic preservation, or a related field and professional experience in historical research, writing or historic preservation OR a Master’s in history, historic preservation, or a related field
- Working knowledge of regional history
- Working knowledge or principles and practices of historic preservation

Program Director

Program directors are responsible for the marketing and outreach of the programs offered by an organization, site, or museum. They act as liaison between the community and the executive director, managing community projects, programs, as well as managing the maintenance of the organization. They also manage program grants and financials and resources available.

General Qualifications for Program Directors:

- Minimum education requirement: a Master’s in community development or a related field with experience in program management
- Strong verbal and written communication and interpersonal skills
- Working knowledge of planning and development, non profit management, and public relations
- Working knowledge and/or experience of regional community
- Ability to handle multiple tasks and deadlines