The Institute for Historical Study

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This newsletter is the first of what is planned as a regular communication to our members, to keep them informed about the projects and activities of the Institute. This is in response to your many inquiries and the growing membership of the past few months.

First of all, here is what has been happening:

. Articles of incorporation are being processed which will establish us as a public-benefit, non-profit corporation under the new California law which will go into affect on January 1, 1979.

. A committee composed of Ellen Huppert, Peter Mellini, Jules Becker, and Paula Gillett, has been working on a proposed budget, and also preparing letters to various foundations in application for "seed money" to finance us for the first two years.

. Since the basic unit of membership participation is the study groups, we have given this activity high priority. Deborah Frangquist, whose report appears below, is acting as the co-ordinator for such groups, and all members not yet participating should contact her.

. A planning committee meeting was held on November 29th, and with eleven members present, it was the consensus of the meeting that dues would be set at $30.00 per year. These can be paid annually, semi-annually, or quarterly, and those for whom it would present a hardship should contact us and other arrangements will be made. Dues for 1980 are due as of January 1st, either $30.00, $15.00, or $7.50, and checks should be made out to Lorrie O'Dell and sent to the Institute's address.

. There will be a meeting of the general membership in late January or early February. Announcements will be mailed when arrangements are completed. Frances Keller is at work on a constitution, which will be presented along with candidates for Institute offices.

INSTITUTE COLLOQUIUM

Harold Anderson, Corporate Archivist at Wells Fargo Bank and a new member of the Institute, spoke on the transition between an academic and a business career and on opportunities for historians in the business world, at an informal colloquium held on November 17th at the Men's Faculty Club, at the University of California, Berkeley. Andy received his PhD in Early Modern Europe (he wrote his dissertation on the Paris Police under Louis XIV), then taught at Stanford University before moving into a new career as archivist, first at the Hoover Institution, than at Wells Fargo.

Andy foresees a significant increase in opportunities for historians in corporations, as these organizations come to realize (just as Wells Fargo did four years ago when it established its history department) that the history of a business is an important corporate asset. The opportunities will probably be greatest, he said, in business archives and in the fields of corporate responsibility and public issues, where historians breadth of outlook and analytical and writing skills are of particular value. At present, Wells Fargo has a staff of twelve in its History Department, two with PhDs and several with backgrounds in archives, museums, and conservation.

He warned that the academic starting a business career needs to make several important adjustments to work patterns. Not the least of these is the 8-to-5 schedule which took him sex months to get used to. Another was the need to work on perhaps a dozen pieces of research and writing at a time. The historian who has been used to working alone must also adapt him/herself to working with a group and to share responsibility for a written document.

For those seeking a business job, Andy gave this advice: prepare a good resume and cover letter; emphasize writing skills and include a variety of experience outside scholarly work in history; be sure to read the newsletters of professional organizations that list non-teaching jobs, e.g., EIB, the newsletter of the Society of American Archivists, and the back pages of the Chronicle of Higher Education.

We thank Andy for his thoughtful and informative talk, and look forward to further presentations by other historians working in the growing field of public history, i.e., history outside the traditional classroom setting.

REPORT ON THE NEW YORK CONFERENCE

Paula Gillett represented the Institute at a conference on "Independent Research Institutions and Scholarly Life in the 1980s" which was organized by the New York-baed Institute for Research in History, and funded by the Ford Foundation. The programs and conversations of those two days made it clear that we are part of a national movement.

A major theme of the conference was the importance for many of us of the transition from "displaced academics" to "independent scholars," (see Malcolm Scully's fine article on the conference in the Cronicle of Higher Education, October 29) a change that is a necessary first step, for without the development of new organizations, "independent scholars" will very likely be isolated scholars, working without the benefit of peer-group support, intellectual stimulation, scholarly community, and professional affiliation.

Represented at the conference were independent research institutions from all over the country, including long established ones like the Newberry Library, the Eleutherian Milla Historical Library, and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, and new ones, like the Cen ter for Independent Study (New Haven, Connecticut), the Organization for Asian Research Scholars (Tucson, Arizona), and the Institute for Historical Study. Also attending were representatives of the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and of several state humanities and arts councils. Richard Kirkendall represented the Organization of American Historians and James Banner the American Association for the Advancement of the Humanities.

The accounts given by the various research institutions of their development and future plans suggest that, while the employment crisis in the academic world was without question the motive force behind the formation of most of these new institutions, once formed the new groups established independent validity by exploring functions seldom addressed by traditional academic departments. Once established, they said, these independent scholarly institutions must turn their attention to two critical areas of concern, one practical and the other philosophical.

First is the achievement of financial stability. Public and private funding in the humanities is not expected to increase, so all our organizations are competing for a fixed supply of operating capital as far as grant monies are concerned. They said it was therfore essential that we explore new ways of developing ongoing sources of income; for example, projects which could end with the development of a study guide for teachers or a tourist pamphlet for a historic site, films and video-tapes created by projects can be rented by schools or community groups.

The philosophical issue is the question of self-definition, and this was the subject dealt with by two guest speakers at the conference: Thomas Bender of New York University, and Burton Bledstein of the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle Campus. Both set the problem in the context of the domination of intellectual and cultural life of post-World War II America by the university. Professor Bender saw in the development of these new organizations the promise of a rebirth of the civic culture once institutionalized in literary and philosophical societies and the lyceum movement. In Professor Bledstein's view, the failure of historians to develop vocational opportunities outside the university is a symptom of the university's domination of cultural life; a historian working outside the university feels him/herself outside the mainstream. He suggested that the success of our new organizations would very liekly lead to their absorption by the universities. Professor Bender did not see this ironic form of success as a necessary development, but strongly emphasized that real independence for our organizations can be achieved only by staking out new territory in new ways; he advised that our institutions not accept without question the disciplinary divisions and norms of the university and that we consciously avoid accepting a position in the penumbra of the university.

Paula felt that it was a real privilege to have participated in so rich and stimulating a conference, and to have such an impressive fund of collective wisdom on which to draw. Many of the participants are developing informal networks for the sharing of newsletters and even joint projects. We thank the Institute for Research in History and the Ford Foundation for a stimulating conference.

STUDY GROUPS

A Study Group is any two or more Institute members who work together on a regular basis to study an area of common interest or complete a common project. This definition is necessarily broad, because the primary purpose of Study Groups is to build a sense of community with colleagues. Each set of colleagues then sets its own goals and determines its own activities.

In many cases it will be common research interests which will bring colleagues together. In other cases people living or working near each other will form groups based on proximity. Although we expect that most groups will wish to meet together regularly, frequency of meetings will vary. Furthermore, we are looking for ways in which colleagues at some distance from each other can work together. One suggestion is that a group could circulate written material round-robin fashion, with each member of the Group not only passing on material received in the mail, but also adding ideas, comments, new material, etc.

Several Study Groups are not in the process of forming (see list at end). The Chair for Study Groups is working to match people with common interests, but no one needs to wait to be contacted. Check the membership list for members with similar interests, check with the Chair for Study Groups for more names, talk with each other to narrow down your focus and decide how you want to operate in the near future, and you have a Study Group.

The following Groups are in the formation process now:

1. Work in Society: Marxist and other viewpoints - contact Deborah Frangquist (415) 648 4026 .
2. The Arts and Historical Education - contact Joanne Lafler (415) 547 1791
3. Diffusion of Ideas in Society - contact Lorrie O'Dell (415) 451 8682
4. California Oral History - contact Gayle Escobar (415) 347-9669
5. History of Reading and Writing - contact Steve Sikora (415) 526 7412

Any other groups forming, or any individual looking for members with whom to form a group, please contact the Chair for Study Groups so that we can publicize your interest and start a list of groups.

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FOR YOUR INFORMATION

The following new members have joined us during the month of November:

Jules Becker, a doctoral candidate at UCB, is writing a dissertaion on crime and race in the San Francisco press from the 1880s to the 1920s. He has his own Public Relations firm in San Francisco.

Harold Anderson is Corporate Archivist for Wells Fargo Bank, and his dissertation was a study of the Paris Police under Louis XIV. He has taught at Stanford, and worked as an archivist at the Hoover Institution.

Elizabeth White is on the Board of Directors of the Organization of Asian Research Scholars. Her historical interests include South Asia, and Women in Islamic Society.

Grace Larsen in Professor of History and Academic Dean at Holy Names College, and interested in American and California History.

Steve Sikora has an MA in history and three years of doctoral work at UCB. His areas of historical interest include the history of reading and writing, and the history of literature.

Vincente Tang is a Consultant with the Chinese Cultural Foundation in San Francisco, and is interested in Chinese History, and California History as it relates to Chinese women.

Karen Reeds has a PhD in the History of Science, and it employed as an assistant Sponsoring Editor at the University of California Press.

LOOKING AHEAD

If any of you are planning to attend the American Historical Association convention in New York City between Christmas and New Years, the Institute for Research in History has invited us to visit them while there. Their address is: 55 West 44th Street, New York, and their phone is (212) 730 5488.

The Institute is interested in sponsoring a Speaker's Bureau, which will provide speakers on various topics of interest to local community groups and organizations. The first step, of cource, is to locate our own resources. If you are interested in participating in a Speaker's Bureau, please send your name, resume and a short description of the topics on which you would like to speak to Roberta Wollons at the Institute address.

The next step will be to inform community organizations of our existence and of our services. If you have any ideas about topics of local interest or groups which use speakers, please pass the information along. We have an opportunity here to disseminate the fruits of our work and our special interests in a non-traditional way. We don't need institutions to share our knowledge.

There is some information which the Institute could use, which many members could supply us. Do you know of any meeting places which we could either use free or could rent for a nominal charge? If so, please let us know as finding meeting places will be a continuing problem.

Do you have any ideas for future programs which the Institute could sponsor? If so, please pass along these ideas also.

Do you have names and addresses for prospective members? If you let us know this information, we will be happy to send out membership information to them.

Do have a happy holiday season, and we shall hope to see you all at the meeting in early 1980.