

**ILLINOIS HISTORY FAIR
Teacher Handbook**

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

Student Historian Program

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Preface

The Illinois History Fair Teacher Handbook is a compilation of materials to assist new and veteran teachers, and students embarking on their Illinois History Fair experience. The idea behind compiling these guidelines is hopefully to provide new teachers with a comprehensive source to answer questions regarding Illinois History Fair.

A positive aspect of the program is the freedom students are afforded when deciding on their topic, and picking a format. This breadth of freedom may also extend to the individual's approach on how to disseminate their historical information. Indeed, students must follow the rules and fit their project into history fair categories, but creativity is encouraged.

A section on hosting your school history fair was authored by Jim Berezow of Unity Point School in Carbondale. This is a very important aspect of the program and we hope you will realize the many benefits for your students after reading the section. Many of your questions may not necessarily be answered by reading the handbook. If this is the case please call the Student Historian Program and I will do my best to help.

Dear Illinois History Fair Teacher:

Your first year working with students in the Illinois History Fair program will most likely involve being asked quite a few questions. We hope this handbook will help you in answering some of those questions.

Illinois History Fair is an innovative way to teach students the importance of learning state and local history. It allows your students to communicate a story they have personally selected, in a variety of truly exciting formats. Writing and performing a drama, videotaping and editing a television style documentary, constructing an exhibit with their artwork, photographs and labels, or writing a research paper are projects the kids really enjoy doing. The program does cross disciplines, but the focus always remains on the social sciences and importance of studying Illinois' history and attempting to analyze and connect the topic with broader themes.

Every one of your students—not just those receiving superior ratings—will benefit greatly from their experiences researching and developing a Illinois History Fair project. We think you will too.

Sincerely,

Pete Harbison
Student Historian Program Coordinator

REGIONAL, EXPO AND NATIONAL HISTORY DAY

What Is Illinois History Fair?

Illinois History Fair is an annual statewide competition that gives junior and senior high school students (grades 6-12) an opportunity to win awards and much-deserved recognition by researching state and local history through various history-related projects pertaining to Illinois.

Many schools host their own history fair and advance the best entries to the Regional History Fairs which are held in the early spring at college campuses throughout Illinois. Projects and papers judged to be superior advance to the statewide Illinois History Expo held each May in Springfield. Selected projects will represent Illinois at the University of Maryland in mid-June during the National History Day competition.

Illinois History Fair is an excellent and exciting academic competition that improves student learning skills in a variety of disciplines. Students will improve research methods as they explore Illinois' rich history and share their newly-acquired knowledge with classmates, parents and teachers from across the state. Recognition students receive from their community, school, and family for academic achievement is meaningful and important.

Students are invited to enter projects in any of these categories: research paper, exhibits, dramatic performances, and media.

Illinois History Expo Awards and Scholarships

Superior, Excellent, and Good awards are given at both the Illinois History Fair Regional Fairs and the Illinois History Exposition. Students also receive written evaluations from the judges.

Illinois College Scholarships are awarded to two high school students who write the best research papers on the Civil War and Illinois.

The Governor's Award is given by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency to the School judged to have done the most to advance the study of Illinois and local history, both in the classroom and in the community.

Abraham Lincoln Association Award is presented to one research paper or media project on Abraham Lincoln in each division.

Each student will win \$500.00.

Illinois & Michigan Canal Awards for projects related to canal history.

Illinois Association of Museums Exhibit Design Award is awarded to an exhibit which contains excellent design elements.

Illinois Labor Society Awards are given to projects exploring Illinois labor related topics.

Illinois State Organization, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) recognizes projects dealing with a small town's history.

Illinois Society of Colonial Dames 17th Century Awards are presented to four different exhibits at the Illinois History Expo.

Benefits for Teachers and Students

- Provides history teachers with an innovative instructional tool
- Students develop research skills and the ability to locate source materials
- Students pick their own topic on Illinois history and the type of project they wish to develop
- Helps refine presentation skills in writing, visual projects, and dramatic performances
- Students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills to manage information
- Encourages the study of state and local history by offering students a variety of disciplines to communicate their research
- Helps students develop a sense of history as change over time as they learn analytical skills
- Gets students out the classroom and into the community to investigate local history
- Gets students in touch with the history that changed their own community
- Involves parents and other members of the community in education
- Regional contests expose students to the universities in their state
- Gives public recognition to both students and their teachers

School history fairs are beneficial to teachers, students, parents, and communities.

They promote excellence in education and allow students to assimilate skills that will be applicable for a successful educational career. Several suggestions for the WHYS and HOWS of holding a local history fair are listed below.

Why schools should hold a local history fair:

1. Promote local, regional, and state history to your community. A local history fair is an excellent way to educate your community of the history that abounds throughout the state of Illinois. Make an effort to have some projects address and document local or regional history. Community pride can be developed especially when local and regional history is emphasized. This is also a great way of showing the community that your school's history department is actively involved in the recording and preservation of local, regional, and state history.
2. Give all participating students recognition for their work. History fair projects represent a great deal of work for the students involved. A local history fair gives teachers the opportunity to give recognition to all students, including those students who are not selected to advance to regional competition. The history department should hold an awards day for all students where reinforcement of a job well done and recognition is bestowed. Celebrating the learning experience will deepen the student appreciation of their research and overall educational experience. Recognition by teachers, parents, peers, and the community will develop pride and confidence in participating students
3. Show students in the lower grades what to expect. Students in the lower grades who are not yet involved in history fair will become excited about history if allowed to view local history fair projects. Young students will also know what a quality project looks like and thus will be able to plan ahead. The local history fair as part of the curriculum will become stronger each year if students in the lower grades are allowed to get involved. Set up a schedule so that all lower classes will be able to view the local history fair without being too crowded or rushed for time. Conclude by giving the students time to ask questions after viewing the projects.

4. Challenge students to qualify their projects for regional competition. By taking only the top projects to regional competition, all students will be challenged to do their best work in order to receive the reward of going to a regional fair. Project creativity is an element that will noticeably develop as students try to make their projects unique. Here is the opportunity for students to express their knowledge in a variety of new and exciting formats. Weak projects should not enter regional competition. The quality of each project needs to be the main focus when selecting projects for regional competition.

5. Teach students to research topics, locate primary sources, and develop writing skills. Hosting an in-school history fair is an excellent idea for involving your students in learning valuable research, writing, and other skills. Your students will incorporate the understanding of history with methods of language arts, electronic media, music, etc., to tell a story about the past. Finding primary sources to bring history alive is another skill that students will find necessary to acquire. In addition, students will also develop critical thinking and problem solving skills. Involvement in Illinois history fair projects is an exciting and innovative teaching tool that will get your students out of the classroom and into the community to investigate their past.

6. The local history fair will become a part of the curriculum. Establishing a local history fair and using it as a part of the grading system will allow the fair to become a part of the curriculum.

7. Get the community involved. Invite the community to the local history fair and place interesting projects in public locations to create interest. Involving the community often taps primary sources that may have been previously unknown and can be used for future projects.

8. Parents become involved. Hosting a local history fair can involve parents in the student's education. Teacher/student contracts and teacher/parent contracts can actively involve parents to insure that projects develop on a timely manner. It is also an excellent way to make positive parent/teacher reports.

9. Weaker projects will improve the following year. Comments from teachers who are experienced in running a local history fair have stated that the quality of projects increase from year to year. This is no doubt credited to the increased skills of the teachers involved as they cultivate experience, but also to the competitive

nature and pride of the students involved. Using cooperative learning methods also helps students learn from each other and improves the quality of projects.

10. Great amount of control by the teacher to structure the fair. The local history fair allows teachers to recognize the students who excel at this initial level. The subjectivity of the hundreds of individuals involved in the evaluation process at the regional and statewide exposition will always be present. School history fairs can be more objective with the local teacher in control of judges and making final decisions on who advances to the regional fair. As the classroom teacher is aware of the amount of work each student invests, he/she can serve as a more informed arbiter.

How to hold a local history fair

1. Volunteer versus mandatory. Which students should get involved? Many teachers require all students to participate in the local history fair while others operate on a voluntary basis only. Often much depends upon whether or not the students are required to participate in the school's science fair. This is an issue that can be resolved through interdepartmental cooperation.
2. Set a date for the local history fair early. Once you have decided to hold a local history fair, the teacher responsible should decide on a date with the school superintendent or principal. This will help avoid conflicts with other school activities that have been scheduled by the science, music, or art departments.
3. Contact the state or local history fair director. In order to coordinate the local history fair with the regional and state fairs, the local history fair sponsor should contact the regional history fair director or state directors. Let them know you want to start a local fair. At the state level, Pete Harbison (217) 782-2981/pete.harbison@illinois.gov should be contacted as soon as possible. They will provide all necessary information for the local sponsor to contact the regional director and to coordinate the two fairs.
4. Get the media involved. The local sponsor should contact the assignment editors from the local newspaper, television and radio stations. Let them know that you are holding a local history fair. Invite them to attend and to film or interview students and staff. Educate them as to what a history fair is. Surprisingly, the media is usually uninformed and are more than happy to cover such a unique

event. This recognition by the media is simply an irreplaceable source of motivation.

5. Advertise. Use school resources to advertise. Create a local history fair web page for your school. Advertise on hallway bulletin boards, the school paper, lunch menus, posters, flyers, and place history fair pictures from local, regional, and state fairs in the school yearbook. Also, history teachers should decorate their rooms with pictures from previous fairs. Motivation radiates from these pictures when students see their peers involved in a history fair and the surrounding events.

6. When to start—a potential time line. Teachers should give their students as much time as possible to work on their history fair projects. An introduction to the history fair should begin the first month of school and should continue throughout the year with the teacher having project checks every few weeks or as needed. A potential time line follows. August/September Send informational letter to parents/guardians about the local history fair and time line necessary for the completion of student projects. Students should select topics of interest, and begin collecting bibliography sources. October/ November Select at least five primary sources, collect pictures, gather materials for projects, design a layout for backboards, write scripts, design model and media layouts. December/January: Begin to put final project together, write annotated bibliographies. February/March Complete summary sheets, check for details, creativity, neatness, and presentation of design. The local history fair should be approximately two weeks before the regional history fair in order to forward advancing student names with project information to the regional director.

7. How do you get started? Guidelines will be mailed to you once you have contacted the regional or state directors. When this information is received, share it with your students immediately. Guidelines are provided for each of the categories that the students may enter.

8. Contact your local library. Please do not overload your local librarian! Let them know that your students will be involved in researching local, and state.history. Provide a list of possible research topics. Libraries may be able to stock possible research topics if they are given enough advanced notice.

9. Judges. The evaluation of projects can be completed by the local sponsor, members of the local staff, qualified parents, history graduate students, faculty of nearby colleges, or a combination from this list. Rely on yourself or immediate

members of your staff if it is more comfortable to do so. As you gain experience, you may want to make use of other resources in your community.

10. Which projects will advance? Remember that weak-projects should not advance to regional competition. The regional or state directors will provide a copy of their evaluation sheet that can also be used at the local level. Whether you use the state evaluation form or create your own guidelines, remember to reward projects that have emphasized attention to details, neatness, creativity, and complete documentation of some aspect of history from beginning to end.

11. How to give awards and recognition. Set aside time after your local fair to recognize all students that participated. Medals, ribbons, certificates, pins, books, gift certificates, etc., can all be used as a form of recognition. Categories for recognition of projects could include: Superior (those projects that will advance to regional competition), Excellent (projects which fall just below the numerical value needed to qualify for regional competition), Most Creative, Best Design, Most Improved, etc. Include any other category you can imagine so that every student will be included. During the awards ceremony take many pictures so that you can create a bulletin board for the following year. It cannot be emphasized too often that motivation through praise, pictures of peers at the local, regional, and state history fairs, and awards will help turn your local history fair into a successful addition to your curriculum.

Summary Statement Form

Regional and State Summary Statement Form

Students must fill out a summary statement form to provide insights for the judging team. Students are not interviewed at the regional or state history fairs, so the summary statement form allows the judges answers to relevant questions regarding the development of the history fair project. The following questions must be answered by the students.

1. Explain the main theme of your entry. How and why has this topic gained an important place in history?
2. Briefly explain why you became interested in researching your subject.
3. What was the favorite part of the project?
4. Explain the stages involved in creating your entry.
5. How much time did you spend researching and developing your project?
6. What did you learn from your research? Did you find any conflicting information about your topic while you were researching? If so please explain.
7. Please explain the project's relationship to Illinois history.
8. Attach a bibliography of the sources you used. Include any oral history interviews. Also list libraries, museums, or other institutions you have visited for your project.

National History Day Entries Questions

1. What is the relationship between your Illinois history entry and the theme for National History Day?

How Illinois History Fair Projects are Evaluated

Quality of Analysis:

Does the project ask and answer a question or questions? Better projects ask and answer more important questions than who did what and when. It asks why. It answers the question(s) in steps leading to a logical conclusion. It relates the answers to broad items of interest to many people. For example, a project about a business' history will ask: "Were there others like it elsewhere? What happened to them and why? Is there a pattern or is the project dealing with an isolated event? Do the facts support the conclusion?"

Historical Knowledge

Does the project demonstrate understanding of relevant factual information or does it include superfluous as well as relevant information? Does it effectively use important information at all points in the steps of analysis leading to the conclusion?

Quality of Sources:

Are a variety of sources (primary documents, secondary accounts, oral interviews, statistics, and illustrations) used? Better projects make use of each of the above. Weaker projects rely heavily on one source. Encyclopedia articles may be used for an overview of the topic but not as a main source for the project. Make sure your internet sources are sound.

Quality of Presentation:

This realm depends exclusively on the look of the project. Is it neat and orderly helping the viewer or reader to see the project makers point, not drawing the viewer's attention, for example, to bad spelling, uneven exhibit labels, incomplete footnotes, or sloppy typing

Advice for Students Choosing a Topic

How do you choose a topic? How do historians select topics for their research? In both cases the answer is the same: **people start with things that interest them.** These interests are often too general in scope to turn directly into a research topic, but at least they provide some general direction and a basis for looking around the library and asking others for advice.

The next step often is to look for a readily available group of primary sources in your general area of interest. Since you do not have a lot of time to search for primary sources, it is often advisable to find them before defining your topic too narrowly. Professional historians do the same thing. They often talk about how their specific projects have grown out of the primary sources they have found.

Once you have a general topic the next step is to make your project manageable. This means carefully defining your subject. The suggestions on this page are meant to help you narrow your topic after you have found a suitable group of primary sources to serve as the core of your research. First, each working title should indicate the people, the place, and the time of the topic. The first page of your research notebook might be a series of titles recording possibilities and ideas for your consideration. As you think about each topic, try to turn the title into a major question which will provide a focal point for your research activities. By formulating questions you might start to favor one title over another, helping you make a final decision on your topic. Plan to take some time in choosing a suitable topic. All in all, a week will probably be needed just to choose a topic, find some useful primary sources, and define the problem you want to address in your research.

How does one go about making a project interesting? There are two ingredients for insuring interest. First, if you remember back to the day you started, you selected a topic that interested you. Whatever your topic is, you chose it for your own reasons. As you plan your presentation, your enthusiasm for your subject will show. Do not try to hide it! Enthusiasm is infectious: when people sense that you are excited over something, they become interested.

Second, you must narrow your topic for your audience. What is it you wish your audience to see? What is it you wish them to understand? People will lose interest

if your project appears to be aimless or lacks a thesis that is easily understood.
Why is your topic important to your audience?

Tips for Your Student Historians

- Do select a topic that is interesting and unique
- Don't pick an over used topic, but if you must, attempt to research a topic that occurred as a result of the big picture
- Don't select a topic that is too broad
- Don't confuse a history fair project with a current event
- Do tell a story and why the story is important and relates to areas in the larger perspective
- Do remember history is about change over time
- Don't just list facts and chronicle the topic
- Do explain to the reader or viewer why the story is important and analyze the subject
- Do use a variety of sources, and make an effort to locate primary sources such as newspapers, diaries, oral interviews, journal articles ect.

How to Help Students Pick a Format

The next logical step after choosing a topic and narrowing it down to manageable proportions is to decide on a format for the presentation of your research. There are five major ways in which you may present your findings: (1) by writing a research paper, (2) by constructing an exhibit, (3) by putting on a dramatic presentation, (4) by producing a media presentation.

Each category has within it several different approaches. It is wise to select a format before you make a schedule and begin your research because each format imposes some special requirements. Think carefully about all five of the alternatives. That way you can be surer of your choice and you might even run across some tips or pointers that can be adapted to another format. Each requires some special skills and you certainly will want to assess your own particular strengths and weaknesses as well as the resources available to you. Don't be misled into thinking that choosing a format is always an easy decision or one that can be made quickly.

A summary statement is used to accompany an exhibit, a performance, or a video presentation. It is a short, written account, usually only two pages in length, which provides information about your project. It clarifies the basic thesis of your research by noting the questions it asks, the documents used to find the answers, and the way you went about doing your project. It answers basic questions such as: What happened? How did this change occur? Why is this important? What does this conclusion mean?

The major differences between exhibits, performances, and media presentations on the one hand, and a research paper on the other, is the way the findings of your research are presented to an audience. A research paper takes the reader through a topic from beginning to end, stopping here and there to examine its various aspects. There is a logical flow of ideas from the first page to the last. In exhibits, presentations, and performances, however, the results of the research are presented visually. When people view them, they must be able to grasp your thesis or major argument through what they see. Then why have a written summary statement for visual presentations? There are three major reasons: 1.) Explain your goals and your research design. In other words, explain your purpose and the process of putting the project together. Where did you get those interesting photographs? Why did you choose the costumes that you did? Why did you decide to do a media presentation? 2.) List your conclusions and the supporting evidence. Your critics

will compare what you say in your summary statement with what they see in your project. Every conclusion in your summary ought to be clearly evident in the project. In your statement you may elaborate on your conclusions and acknowledge the sources for any specific ideas you may have borrowed. In other words, you are to provide documentation as if you were writing an essay. 3.) List the institutions where you did your research. Tell people how you went about doing your work. Which libraries, museums, and historical societies did you visit? How did you get those oral interviews that were so interesting? Which librarians, museum curators, teachers, and community people assisted you? What problems did you encounter? Be sure to include a complete bibliography of the sources you used.

Primary Sources

Formal Personal Records

Contracts and agreements
Wills
Court records
Certificates and licenses
Receipts

Institutional Records

Charters and constitutions
Membership registers
Minutes
Correspondence and reports
Programs and Publications
Records

Informal Personal Records

Diaries and memoirs
Financial statement
Letters
Memoranda and notes
Family and household records
Photo albums

Government Documents

Court proceedings
Laws and edicts
Constitutions
Reports and proceedings
Treaties
Records and census data

Popular Culture

Folklore
Mass media
Organized sports
Songs and hymns
Advertising

Publications

Treatises
Periodicals and newspapers
Histories and biographies
Travel accounts
Literature

Maps

The Arts

Fine Arts

Graphic arts

Music

Design

Photography

Artifacts

Tools and machines

Money and stamps

Containers

Furniture and furnishings

Clothing and personal care

Toys and amusements

Transportation equipment

Communication equipment

Architecture

Secondary Sources

Almost all types of research are cumulative. This means that any particular project is built on a foundation of prior research. Secondary source readings will provide this type of a foundation for your project. Secondary sources are the reports or products of historical research and recollection that have been done in the past. These efforts are recorded in books, journals, pamphlets, newspapers, and occasionally in unprinted manuscripts. Knowing something about them is a key to a successful effort. There are seven major types of secondary sources you might use in the course of your research.

Textbooks. The place to begin any research project is with a general textbook, perhaps the one you are currently using in class. History textbooks are usually organized in chronological order, proceeding period by period. Thus they provide excellent ways for you to develop the general context for a project. What was going on during this period? What was happening at the same time? How does your topic relate to these developments in the mainstream of history? You might also consider using a second textbook, perhaps a general survey designed for a college course, or even a more specialized text used in advanced college courses.

Reference books. Encyclopedias, special historical dictionaries, handbooks, and historical atlases provide excellent summaries, overviews, and graphic materials for most topics. An encyclopedia designed for students like the *World Book* usually has study aids at the end of the major articles. These include outlines, basic questions, and suggested readings. Advanced reference encyclopedias like the *Britannica* often provide long, detailed essays by leading scholars on a variety of topics.

General works. Historical accounts appear in a variety of formats. Most are organized by period, decade, or topic, like a history of the Progressive Era, an account of the 1960s, or the story of railroads in Illinois. Some general works are collections of brief studies, others use a comparative or thematic approach to combine several related topics into one book. Remember that you are not expected to read the whole book when doing

research. Use the table of contents and the index to locate the sections that are useful.

.Biographies. A biography is a written account of a person's life. Often a biographer will spend a lot of time placing the subject's life in a broader context, leading to a "life and times" book. Others focus on the personality or psychological makeup of a person. Collective biographies treat the lives of a group of people as Prairie School architects or women reformers.

Monographs. A serious, detailed study of one particular subject is called a monograph. A study of Lincoln's career as a state legislator or the colonization work of the Illinois Central Railroad are examples of monographs. These studies are always based directly on the primary sources. General works, in turn, are usually based on monographs.

Articles Articles in scholarly journals, magazines, newspapers, yearbooks, and other periodical publications may either be very specialized like monographs or very broad in scope like general works. Because articles are usually shorter pieces, they are very useful to consult for ideas and to use as models. Scholars value articles because they usually represent the most current work on a topic. Parts of many monographs appear first as articles. Magazines like *American Heritage* feature articles addressed to general readers. These are probably the best sources for locating statements on why particular topics are of interest to contemporary readers.

Reviews. Book materials are often very technical in nature. You should be aware-that these types of studies exist, but do not be troubled if you do not get a chance to use all of them. Reading a critical book review of a study in your area of interest will not take much time but will alert you to areas of current debate. You can easily locate book reviews through several types of indexes which the reference librarian will be happy to locate for you.

Primary Sources and Documents

Although secondary sources like textbooks, reference books, historical accounts, and biographies are very valuable to consult throughout any research project, the original part of your work will rest most heavily on primary sources. The dividing line between primary and secondary sources is not very rigid and many books could fit into either category. But primary sources include much more than books and other printed materials. The list on the next page does not include every possibility, but it is enough to get you started thinking about places to look for information that is "primary" to your research topic.

Each type of source poses some special challenges. If, for example, you decide to use a building as a primary source, you might profit from talking to an architect, a builder, or someone in the construction trade about buildings in general and your structure in particular. Each of these people has some expert knowledge on buildings as source materials. Another suggestion would be to ask a librarian to help you find a book or an article on using buildings as sources. Dozens of such helpful guides exist and most of them were designed for beginning students. Then there is a whole field called architectural history which has its own books, magazines, and journals that you might want to consult for examples, suggestions, and general approaches.

Documents are particular kinds of primary sources. They are written records which preserve the memory of a person, place or event. Written records are the primary sources most often used by historians. When you verify that something happened in the past by providing a reference to one of these records, you are said to document it. A **documentary** television program, for example, is one whose accuracy or truthfulness can be documented by records. **In all research projects it is necessary that you provide references to written records to document your findings.**

Documents, of course, can contain mistakes. It will not always be easy to separate the facts they contain from the opinions they express. Any type of written material can be considered a document in some sense even though these records were originally made for a variety of different

purposes. Every historian must do some detective work to establish the accuracy and the original purpose of the documents he or she wants to use. To be a good detective you must carefully identify a document and look for clues to help put the record into its original context.

Once the document has been identified and understood, then you can begin to think about how you might use it in your research project. In the process of considering its utility, the researcher will also begin evaluating the document.

As you can see, the process of finding and analyzing documents is a major part of historical research. Actually many fine research papers have been centered on the analysis of a single primary source or a small group of related documents.

Performance Category

The performance category allows you to create a play based on an historic event. It is important to have a dramatic appeal in the presentation.

Creativity is important when using this format, and using live actors and props helps to tell a convincing story in a compelling fashion.

- Get an idea, look around, talk to people and think about a topic.
- Define the topic and then write a thesis statement.
- Research primary and secondary sources, and look over notes before writing an outline.
- Research before thinking about the performance aspect.
- When you write your script include references to historical material. You should include information from the best primary sources. This can be accomplished by using direct quotes, or taking excerpts from speeches and reciting them on stage.
- Do not just recite a oral report on a character or event. You must become the figure by portraying him or her. If you are dramatizing an event, you may have to become multiple characters to tell the whole story.
- Props can be helpful, however, remember you only have 5 minutes for set-up and take down. Though props may be helpful to tell the story, it is going to be your research, script, and ability to dramatically tell the story that is important.
- Good costumes help make you convincing, but be sure they are appropriate to your topic. Look at photographs or costume guides if you are unsure about appropriate dress.
- Practice! Practice! Practice!
- Have a member of the local theater group critique the performance.

Exhibit Category

The purpose of an exhibit is to display information for the viewer in an attractive and easy to understand format. Your exhibit is going to be very similar to the displays you have seen in museums. Striking a balance between well-placed historical information and images is very important; the display must be informative, easy to follow, and visually appealing! Too much text and too few images is not the answer, and indeed, too many pictures without enough text also fail to achieve the right balance. We will examine this in more detail later

Size Requirements

The overall size of your exhibit when displayed for judging must be no larger than 40 inches wide, 30 inches deep, and six feet high. The table height is not figured into the size of the exhibit.

Three-Panel Exhibit

The most common exhibit format displayed at Illinois History Expo is the three-panel display board. This is an effective and uncomplicated way to visually display the historical information you have collected on your topic. Following these design tips will help the judges discern the subject and the supporting information backing your thesis.

- Be sure your title is the main focus of the center panel.
- Also put the thesis or main ideas on the center panel. The judges now have quickly read the main ideas and can read the supporting material on the side panels.
- Side panels can be used to tell the story in a chronological format with the beginning on the top left panel and ending with the conclusion on the bottom of the right panel. This is where you will analyze the importance of your topic.
- Artifacts or other support material may be placed on the table between the side panels

Labeling and Exhibit Design: Orientation, Segmentation, and Explanation

The placement and size of your exhibit labels is very important in directing the viewer's attention to the right place at the right time. In other words, you want the judges to quickly become acquainted with history fair topic (**orientation**) and then move to your thesis and general background information. The size of the title and thesis statement labels should be the biggest on the board.

The next portion of your exhibit to be examined by the viewer hopefully will be the section introducing the first part of the story. The exhibit should be segmented into sections that explain the different parts of the story or **segmentation** of the historical event or person. You may look at the topic this way: first explain the foundation or background and then move to the historic event. The final portion of the display is the conclusion; here you must explain to the viewer how the historic event is significant and how it impacted life then and now. The labels used to separate the segments will be smaller in size than the labels used for the title of the exhibit. The smallest text is used to tell the story and for photograph captions (**explanation**).

Jane Addams: Fighting for

Homeless Children in Illinois

Addams advocated in the Illinois Legislature to eliminate the warehousing of homeless children in large institutional homes. She wanted to move them into smaller home-like settings. This started a new era in social services that made the Hull House known world wide.

Title and Thesis Statement

Jane Addams: Early life in Cedarville, Illinois

(Segmentation or the parts)

Jane Addams was born in a small town in northern Illinois

(explanation of story and photo captions)

One way to make sure you titles and captions stand out is to put the text on light color paper and then use a darker color for the background. You can use construction paper, tag board, or mat board. For the text, if you select dark black lettering it will be easier to read. Photographs and other images will stand out if you put them on backgrounds as well.

There can be a fine balance between too much information and too little on an exhibit. If you add too many illustrations or photographs or too much text, the exhibit board can become confusing and hard to follow. It may be enticing to share all the information you have researched on your exhibit board, however, this is not a good idea. Pick only the most important items for the exhibit. Organization and clarity are very important aspects for a successful Illinois History Expo exhibit!

Media Documentary Projects

Media documentaries allow you to make a ten-minute documentary like you may have seen on PBS or the History Channel. Therefore it is good idea to watch quality documentaries to see for you the approach and techniques used by professionals. The most popular format currently is digital video presentations. These are the tips to help you succeed with your production:

- Get an idea, look, around, talk to people, and think about the topic.
- Define the topic and write a thesis statement.
- Research primary sources and secondary sources and look over notes before writing an outline.
- Make a storyboard of the types of images you want to use to explain your topic.
- Collect a large number of images to avoid repetition and to keep the program interesting
- Appropriate music is important addition to your script. Be careful to keep the volume at a level that does not distract from the narration.
- Write your script first and then add images.
- Make sure the script and the images on the screen go together.
- Be sure that the narration is clear and the pace allows the viewer to hear every work clearly.
- Use a tripod whenever possible.
- Preview early and re-edit at least once.

DVD Presentations

The availability of home video cameras and computer software for digital editing can make producing a documentary much easier for you. To assemble a great looking DVD, follow these helpful tips

- Remember a student must operate the camera and editing equipment.
- Map out your scenes on a storyboard before you head out to shoot tape.
- Incorporate a variety of shots in the production: including live interviews, historic photographs, artistic graphics, and live shots of historic places.
- Keep track in a notebook of the scenes shot and the corresponding number in the tape counter.
- Clear and well-paced narration is a very important aspects to a superior media documentary.
- Preview the documentary early to allow enough time for editing.

Research Paper Category

Researching and writing an historical paper for Illinois History Expo is similar to the writing of research papers and books by college professors. Throughout your years in school, you will be expected to write research papers.

Here are the four basic steps to writing a research paper for Illinois History Expo.

1. Selecting your topic
2. Locating sources and collecting relevant information
3. Organizing your notes

4. Presenting the topic in a clear and reasoned paper

There are many available resources that will give useful advice on the writing of research papers. Ask your history teacher or language arts teachers if her or she has any preferences on style and guidelines for you to follow.

What is a footnote?

Footnotes inform the paper reader that some of the information contained in the research paper comes from the work of other writers and are not original thoughts or words of the author. The system of footnoting gives credit for the work of the researchers you used in writing your paper, as well as evidence in support of your ideas. Footnotes normally are used in these situations:

1. **Quoting a Primary Source** – When you take a direct quote from a speech or interview and insert it directly into your paper, you **MUST** footnote the source.
2. **Quoting a Secondary Source**—If you use a direct quote from another book you **MUST footnote the source.**
3. **Paraphrasing a Secondary Source**—Even if you do not use the exact words from a book but are paraphrasing the idea in your own words, you **MUST** still footnote the source.

How many words and how many pages should the paper be?

Illinois History Expo research papers are 1,500 to 2,500 words in length. Papers must be typed, double spaced. Each word or number in the text counts as one word. The word limit does not apply to notes, annotated bibliography, illustration captions, and supplemental appendix materials. This works out to approximately 6 to 10 pages of text. Good luck and happy researching!

Questions about your Final Project

My Illinois History Fair paper/project is

about _____

_____. This story is not just about (person/event) but rather an explanation of how and why your topic is an important story but also has affected the lives of others _____

_____.

Your topic is important because _____ and how does it fit into the larger scope and overall history of the United States

_____. Has anything significantly changed in the world due to your topic's impact

National History Day Project Checklist
Exhibit Category *Individual and Group (2-5 students)*

- No larger than 40 inches wide, 30 inches deep, and 6 feet high when displayed
- 3 copies (plus one for you) of written materials: title page with required information; 500 word description of the research methods used (A judging team may retain one copy for review.)
- Annotated bibliography, separated into primary and secondary sources
- Exhibit addresses the theme
- Title is clear and visible. Labels, captions, and titles include no more than 500 words
- Has visual impact and shows interpretation
- Names and addresses of all group participants listed on entry card
- Entry card and fee mailed by deadline
- Prepared to answer judges' questions at the contest. (Remember that formal narratives are not appropriate responses to questions.)

Performance Category/ Individual and Group (2-5 students) •

- 10 minute maximum for performance
- Maximum 5 minutes to set up and 5 minutes to take down
- 3 copies (plus one for you) of written materials: title page with required information; 500 word description of the research methods used (A judging team may retain one copy for review.) • Annotated bibliography, separated into primary and secondary sources
- Performance addresses the theme
- All props and equipment are student supplied
- Only student entrants run equipment and are involved in the performance
- Extra supplies and materials in case of emergency
- Names and addresses of all group participants listed on entry card
- Entry card and fee mailed by deadline
- Prepared to answer judges' questions at the contest (Remember that formal narratives are not appropriate responses to questions.)

Media Category /Individual and Group (2-5 students)

- 10 minute maximum for presentation
- Maximum 5 minutes to set up and 5 minutes to take down
- 3 copies (plus one for you) of written materials: title page with required information; 500 word description of the research methods used (A judging team may retain one copy for review.)
- Annotated bibliography, separated into primary and secondary sources
- Presentation addresses the theme
- Live student involvement limited to giving name and title and operating equipment
- Names and addresses of all group participants listed on entry card
- Entry card and fee mailed by deadline
- Extra supplies and materials in case of emergency
- Be prepared to answer judges' questions at the contest (Remember that formal narratives are not appropriate responses to questions.)

Historical Paper Category Individual

- 1,500-2,500 words, excluding notes, annotated bibliography, and title page
- Title page with only the required information
- Annotated bibliography, separated into primary and secondary sources
- Paper addresses the theme
- Citations
- Organization shows clear focus and progression
- Entry card, papers, and fee mailed by deadline

ILLINOIS HISTORIC PRESERVATION AGENCY

**For more information, contact Pete Harbison: Student
Historian Program (217) 782-2981
pete.harbison@illinois.gov.**

**Winners of Superior ratings at the Regional History
Fairs, will be invited to the Illinois History Expo held in
Springfield on May 5, 2011.**

