



Association of Historians of American Art Symposium Protocol and Planning Guidelines

Revised April 13, 2026

General Information:

- All members in good standing of the Association of Historians of American Art (AHAA) are eligible to propose an AHAA-sponsored symposium. Non-members are not eligible.
- We strongly discourage AHAA Board members from proposing or co-chairing an AHAA Symposium while they are serving their term on the Board. We similarly discourage Symposium co-chairs from seeking a position on the AHAA Board while they are planning a Symposium. In the exceptional circumstance that a symposium co-chair is elected or appointed to the AHAA Board, they must recuse themselves from all Board discussions about the symposium (and, in the case of co-chair, from AHAA co-chair duties during the symposium, though they will recommence full AHAA co-chair duties following the symposium).
- The symposium will be held biennially.
- Each symposium will take place over a two-day period, ideally a Friday and Saturday, in the Fall, with an optional opening reception or keynote lecture the night before. Organizers should check potential dates for conflicts with major holidays and other conferences that may have similar audiences (SECAC, ASA, etc.)

Proposals:

- AHAA members who would like to host/co-chair a symposium must submit an official proposal to the AHAA Board (hereinafter “the Board”). Each proposal must be authored and sponsored by at least *two* members of AHAA with the intention that the project will be co-chaired by them. In the spirit of AHAA, it is recommended that the co-chairs represent both the academy and the museum world. It is recommended that at least one co-chair be affiliated with a hosting institution.
- All proposers must be willing to serve as one of two co-chairpersons (hereinafter “the co-chairs”) of the proposed symposium.
- Co-chairs should begin the application process by submitting a Letter of Interest. In the Letter of Interest, the co-chairs should outline why the AHAA Symposium should be held at a particular site, as well as the types of collaborations among institutions that the location can offer. AHAA is especially keen on sites where there is a special event/collection/reinstallation occurring in the host city that would be of interest to Americanists. Although proposals can be submitted in advance, AHAA will issue a call for proposals, two years preceding the actual event and following the completion of that year’s symposium. The Letter of Interest will be due **on November 10th**. Applicants will be invited **by December 1st** to submit the rest of the proposal.

The Letters of Institutional Support and co-chairs' C.V.s will be due **January 10th**.

- The Board will review the Letters of Interest and invite selected applicants by December 1st to submit the rest of the proposal by January 10th. The final proposal should consist of three parts: the Letter of Interest (already submitted), at least two Letters of Institutional Support, and the C.V.s of the proposers. The Letters of Institutional Support may be brief but must affirm the backing of the hosting institutions. The Board will select the best proposal based on the following criteria:
 - The quality of the proposal.
 - The location, in terms of facilities, capacity, accessibility, and geographic distribution.
 - Preference will be given to those proposals that confirm the intention, at least in principle, of one or more institutions to serve as venues for the event.
 - Preference will be given to those proposals where there is a financial commitment from one or more of the above-named institutions, and where it can be demonstrated that funding has been secured.
 - Once a proposal has been approved by the Board, the Board will officially appoint the proposers as the co-chairs and they will be responsible for organizing the event in all of its details.
- AHAA encourages symposium organizers to acquire an AHAA institutional membership during the year of the symposium.

Planning Guidelines:

The following guidelines, as established by AHAA, should be followed by the co-chairs as closely as possible. Any intended major deviations from these guidelines must be submitted by the co-chairs in writing and approved by the Board before implementation.

Steering committee and co-chair responsibilities

- The co-chairs will form a Steering Committee (hereinafter “the Committee”) of their own choosing, which can include up to four other members. Committee members must be AHAA members in good standing for the duration of the planning process. In its final form, therefore, the Committee will consist of between two and six members, with many of the members ideally residing in the hosting city, for ease of planning and coordinating events. (At their own discretion, the co-chairs may include an additional, ad hoc member of the committee who is geographically distant from the other members of the Committee.)
- The Committee will work with the Symposium Liaison, an appointed AHAA Board position. The Symposium Liaison will offer regular reports on symposium progress to the Board and will provide the co-chairs with support, as needed, in the development of the symposium, but cannot serve as a co-chair.
- All members of the Committee must commit to attending, in person and at their own expense, at least three meetings and/or conference calls of the Committee to discuss and plan the symposium. As far as is possible, these meetings and/or conference calls will be scheduled at regular intervals throughout the planning period of the symposium and will be held at a time and in a location that is as convenient for individual members of the Committee as feasible. (Any ad hoc, strictly administrative member added to the committee by the Chairs would be exempt from this requirement.)

The co-chairs, working in consultation with the Committee and using these Symposium Protocols as their guide, will have autonomy over all decisions related to the symposium, including but not

limited to:

- The determination of venues and funding sources.
- The theme of the symposium, if any.
- The organizing of the symposium schedule, including the number of sessions, the optional inclusion of a graduate student lightning round, and the selection of speakers and session moderators
- The inclusion of and nature of related receptions, lunches, dinners, and any other special events, including keynote lectures and private tours.
- The nature and number of handouts, abstracts, syllabi, etc., to be distributed in advance of and at the symposium.
- Organizers may choose to have a themed symposium or an open symposium. Any symposium theme will be determined by the co-chairs in consultation with the Committee and will be as broad and inclusive as possible to insure the widest diversity and largest number of participants in the symposium.

Papers

- The organizers should issue a Call for Papers no less than 9 months in advance of the symposium. The CFP should require an abstract of no more than 250 words and the speaker's C.V.
- All speakers must be AHAA members at the time of the symposium.
- Only one submission may be entered for a given symposium.
- Graduate students are welcome to submit to present a full-length paper. They may opt to apply to the graduate student lightning round, if one is being offered, but if so, cannot also apply to present a full-length paper.
- Except in cases of last-minute emergency, papers cannot be delivered in absentia; acceptance as a speaker requires a commitment to attend and participate in the symposium.

Venues

- The venue(s) of the symposium will be secured by the co-chairs with the advice and assistance of the Committee.
- The co-chairs are responsible for determining if liability insurance for the symposium is covered by the hosting institutions. If not, the Symposium Liaison should work with co-chairs to obtain proper event liability insurance for the symposium.
- Any limitations on the number of members who can register for and attend the Symposium will be set by the capacity of the venues. That number will be determined and announced in advance, and when registration opens.
- Symposium venues are free to host additional events, receptions, tours, book fairs, dinners, etc., related to the symposium, but these should be undertaken only with the approval of the co-chairs and the AHAA Board Chairs in consultation with the Symposium Liaison. All expenses for such additional events must be covered by the venues.

Fees and registration

- AHAA requires that attendees of any symposium events must register for the symposium and be charged a registration fee, the proceeds of which go to support AHAA directly.
- Only AHAA members can register for the symposium.
- AHAA will charge a registration fee of \$60.00 for non-student members and a discounted registration fee of \$35.00 for student members.
- Registration will occur via the AHAA website approximately two months prior to the start of the symposium. The Symposium Liaison will work with the Web Coordinator to

provide all relevant information for online registration set-up and related digital communications in a timely manner.

- Any increase to the fee (due to inflation or rising costs) needs to be approved by the Board and recorded in these protocols.

Expenses and funding

- The co-chairs should prepare a preliminary budget at least 12 months in advance, which the Symposium Liaison will submit to the AHAA board. Co-chairs and Symposium Liaison should work with the AHAA Treasurer to clear expenses with ample time before the symposium.
- In recognition of inflation and rising costs, AHAA has increased its participation to covering operating expenses of each symposium from \$5,000 to \$6,500, taken from its annual budget. It is intended that these monies be used to cover general, necessary expenses such as, but not limited to, those for printing, mailing, shipping, marketing, and basic refreshments for attendees.
- All other expenses, including those related to a keynote speaker or pre-planned special events, must be covered by outside funds identified and secured by the co-chairs and the Committee, or sponsored by the participating venues.
- Sponsors who donate space, goods, or other in-kind materials to the symposium may distribute promotional material free of charge in conference packages.
- Should an unaffiliated company, person, or institution wish to advertise in program materials, the co-chairs and the Symposium Liaison will determine the nature of the advertising and fees. The current recommendation is a fee of \$100, to cover the inclusion of a photocopied insert in the program materials. All fees will be remitted to AHAA via the website's online payment option and will go to support AHAA programs.
- Any special discounts offered by participating venues and institutions (as well as for hotel rooms, parking fees, or meal costs) should be clearly outlined in writing, posted on the AHAA website prior to the start of online registration and distributed to all AHAA members.

Publicizing and final report

AHAA will help publicize the symposium through its website and other outreach opportunities as determined by the Board. The Symposium Liaison is responsible for keeping the Board informed of events, updates, and any schedule/venue changes concerning the symposium as they become available so that all publicity will be accurate and up to date.

At the conclusion of the symposium the Committee will submit a final report, including the final budget, final schedule, and statistics regarding attendance, etc.—to the Board. The Committee will also draft a survey of symposium participants to help inform the planning of future symposia; this survey will be sent via the website by the Web Coordinator.