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'Public History in Illinois' exhibit to begin at Booth Library

Clint Walker

On Oct. 1, 2015, the Illinois State Museum closed its doors for nine months amidst a statewide budget crisis. This closure brought the topic of public history in Illinois to the forefront of a national conversation about the relevance of history. In an effort to raise awareness about the importance of public history, EIU’s 2016-17 Historical Administration class, with the support of Booth Library, will present “A Question of History: Public History in Illinois.”

Featuring items from institutions across the state, including the Illinois State Museum, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, and the Lincoln Home National Historic Site, this exhibit traces the role of public and historical institutions of Illinois to show how history was and continues to be vital to people’s cultural heritage and identity.

The opening reception will be held at 7 p.m. March 30 in the library’s West Reading Room and includes a keynote address by Dr. Samuel Wheeler, Illinois state historian.

In conjunction with the opening of the exhibit, the Historical Administration Program will host several events around Charleston focusing on public engagement with history. Admission is free, and all programs and the exhibit are open to the public.

“Finding Yourself: Using Archives to Research Your Family Genealogy” by HA student Cayla Wagner, will be at 5:30 p.m. April 5 in the Witters Conference Room 4440 in Booth Library. This event informs participants how to use the Illinois Regional Archive Depository to research their family history.

“A Keeper of History: Dr. Michael Wiant on Archeology, Public History, and Preserving the Past,” will be held at 5:30 p.m. April 10 in Witters Conference Room 4440 in Booth Library. The lecture discusses the intricacies of being "a keeper of history."

“Asking the Question: A Guided Exhibit Tour” will be offered at 5:30 p.m. April 12 in the library’s Marvin Foyer. HA students will give detailed stories of certain artifacts and the institutions that care for them.

"Photos, Papers, and Publications: Restoring Personal Documents" will be presented by Bob Bertrand at Pensees Bookshop in Charleston at 5:30 p.m. April 19. This workshop will familiarize individuals with the basic materials and techniques used in the restoration of book bindings and their contents. Due to limited space, contact Hailey Paige at hpaige@eiu.edu to register for this event.

“A Question of History: Public History in Illinois” will be on display in the Marvin Foyer of Booth Library from March 30 through July 31. For more information about the exhibit or exhibit programming, visit www.aquestionofhistory.wixsite.com/mysite.