

PHI MU ALPHA  AMONG MEN  
SINFONIA HARMONY

# **Guide to Chapter Historian's Duties**

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## REVISION HISTORY

8/10/2006

Krueger/Ripperton: effects of 2006 National Convention legislation incorporated, visual style updated to 2006 standards.

## INTRODUCTION

This guide to the responsibilities of Chapter Historian is designed to help you carry out the duties required of your position. The duties of Chapter Historian, as defined by the *General Regulations for Collegiate Chapters*, Article XI, Section Five are as follows:

“Through the chapter president, the historian of the chapter shall assist the national staff in preparing all national publications by making prompt and full reports of all local news and other facts which the fraternity may request, and perform other such duties as the chapter may specify.”

The primary responsibility of the chapter historian is therefore the reporting of chapter news to the National Headquarters on a regular basis. In addition, the Chapter Historian's duties include:

- Organizing Chapter Files and Historical Documents
- Preparing an annual scrapbook/yearbook
- Preserving Chapter History
- Researching and compiling chapter history
- Giving historical presentations

All chapter members should be aware of the responsibilities upon Chapter Historian and should elect a man to this office who is consistently organized and thorough. As with *any* office, be aware of the qualities required of the position and match them to strengths of each individual candidate. *Do not take this decision lightly!*

## RECORDING CHAPTER EVENTS

### In Written Form

The Chapter Secretary records proceedings of business meetings, but the Chapter Historian records the events and activities of the chapter outside of meetings. Events and activities should be documented in written form in a journal which he should carry whenever he is present at a chapter activity.

### In Visual Form

In addition to his journal, the Chapter Historian should have a pad of paper and a camera at every chapter event. While the journal should be used to record descriptions of the event, the pad of paper should be used to keep a log of photographs taken. **Do not wait until photographs are developed to log them.** The photograph log should identify:

- A brief caption/description of the event
- the location at which the photograph was taken
- the date
- the names of everyone in the photograph

Photographs should be taken at all chapter activities, and numerous chapter members should be encouraged to bring cameras. The Chapter Historian should also make use of a video camera if available.

If the historian is unable to attend an event, a substitute photographer must be assigned. “Photo Opportunities” should be a regular item of business in the weekly chapter meeting. As soon as the photographs have been developed, the historian should label them appropriately. The items included in the photograph log should be listed on the back of each photograph. All the pictures and negatives should then be labeled and organized in a logical fashion (see “Organizing Chapter Records and Historical Documents” below).

**Annual Chapter Photograph**

The Chapter Historian should also arrange for a group photograph or composite of chapter members each year. Student Activities offices should be able to recommend a professional photographer who can produce a composite photograph. If this is not possible, the Chapter Historian should at the very least take a formal group photograph of the chapter.

## REPORTING CHAPTER NEWS

**To the National Headquarters**

The Chapter Historian is obligated by the *National Constitution* to make "prompt and full reports of all local news" of the chapter to the National Headquarters. Each chapter has a file at the National Headquarters containing as much historical data of the chapter as has been provided by the chapter through the years. In order to keep this information current and to show the range of chapter involvement, the Chapter Historian should regularly send information about special projects to the National Headquarters.

*Most importantly*, a historical summary of the chapter's Chapter news should be compiled throughout the year and submitted annually. A good time to submit this annual historical record is at the end of the Chapter Historian's term, on or before April 1. Remember, the history of Sinfonia is in large part comprised of the individual histories of its chapters. For future generations to know and appreciate the scope and magnitude of the Brotherhood, it is necessary for every chapter to do its part to provide an accurate historical account of each year's activities. Reports to the National Headquarters may also include photographs and other documentation.

**For Submission Fraternity publications**

In order to make the *Sinfonian* and the *Red & Black* successful publications that serve the chapters of Sinfonia, each chapter, through its historian, its secretary, and its president, must work in maximum cooperation with the national headquarters. The Chapter Historian, in cooperation with other chapter officers, should contribute to Fraternity publications by writing about interesting activities of the chapter and its members. The Chapter Historian has a great potential for publicizing the activities of the chapter and bringing to light the chapter's relationship to the musical life of the school and community.

**For Inclusion in alumni or province newsletter and campus or city newspapers**

Receiving proper credit for worthwhile and newsworthy accomplishments is a sure-fire means of building interest in your chapter and will also foster an increased awareness of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia on a national level. It is advisable to inquire about submission formats and schedules.

**Report chapter news on your chapter website or province website**

The Chapter Historian should work with the person in charge of the website to make sure that information is regularly updated. This is a great way for your alumni and for other chapters in your province to keep up with the activities of your chapter.

## ORGANIZING CHAPTER FILES AND HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

In order for your chapter's history to be a useful tool from which the chapter can learn about its past and guide its future, it is important for the chapter's files and historical documents to be well organized. The hardest part of preserving a chapter files is often devising a system of organization. The following Organizational System Guidelines is intended to serve as an aid to creating a system that works best for your chapter.

## Organizational System Guidelines

The following is a sample of a system to organize chapter documents.

- A. Official Records
  1. Chartering Information
  2. *National Constitution, General Regulations for Collegiate Chapters* and chapter and province bylaws.
  3. Rituals and Ceremonies
  4. Fraternity and Chapter History
  5. Handbooks and Guides
- B. Chapter
  1. Minutes (preserve a copy of all agendas and minutes and have them bound together at the end of each school year).
  2. Reports (include written reports of chapter officers and committees with meeting minutes).
  3. Communication (this includes both communication sent and received).
  4. Budgets (preserve a copy of each year's annual budget).
- C. Officers
  1. List of Officers by Year (these files may also include information on officer's duties that is specific to your chapter).
  2. President Activity
  3. Vice-President Activity
  4. Secretary Activity
  5. Treasurer Activity
  6. Historian Activity
  7. Alumni Secretary Activity
- D. Committees
  1. List of Committees by year
  2. Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
  3. Committee Reports
- E. Probationary Membership Program
  1. Initiation Reports
  2. Documented Probationary Membership Program
  3. Miscellaneous items (such as "What Sinfonia means to me" essays, chapter "family trees", etc.).
- F. Activities (utilize Chapter Citation Award application information as a guide for documenting chapter activities. The criteria may be found "Resources" section at <http://www.sinfonia.org/>).
  1. Descriptions of recurring projects and programs (such as *Mills Music Mission*, American Music Recital, annual fundraisers, etc.), including organizational details.
  2. Reports of projects and programs (including any publicity received).
  3. Reports of social activities.
  4. Publicity received by the chapter (such as newspaper articles, etc.).
- G. Publications
  1. *The Sinfonian*
  2. *The Red & Black*
  3. Province newsletters
  4. Chapter newsletters
  5. Alumni Newsletters
- H. Membership
  1. Accurate list of Collegiate Members
  2. Accurate list of Alumni Members
  3. Accurate list of Honorary Members
  4. Achievements of chapter members, both within and outside chapter endeavors.

5. Marriage, birth and death announcements (in preparing death announcements, be certain to include a condensed biographical sketch of the deceased. Always inform your chapter alumni secretary and the national headquarters of any deaths so that the records may be properly revised and fellow alumni informed).
  6. Programs of performances by individual members (including faculty Sinfonians).
- I. Awards and Honors
    - a. Awards Received by Chapter and Members
    - b. Awards Given by Chapter

Materials that can be discarded are:

- Flyers or notices of meetings.
- Routine correspondence such as cover letters from the National Headquarters.
- After six years, cancelled checks, check stubs, statements, invoices, and receipts.

### Organization of Photographs

Photographs are an important part of a chapter's historical files. A Chapter Historian should have a system for the organization and storage of photographs so that they can be easily found when needed and so that future generations can have a visual record of the chapter's past. When labeling photographs, it is important to record the following information:

- Event or occasion
- Date
- Location
- Names of individuals in photograph
- Corresponding number on photo negative (this will make it much easier to make re-prints when necessary).

The best way to label photographs is to place a sticker on the back of each photograph and print the information in pencil (ink tends to smear on the face of other photographs when stacked together). Store all photographs from one year together, including photo negatives. Make sure your negatives always remain with the photographs; this will make it much easier to find negatives when they are needed.

It is highly suggested that you have photographs saved electronically to CD-ROM when developed. This will help to keep your photographs organized and easily accessible, and will also enable you to include them for publication without the necessity of scanning them (which can be very time-consuming). If photographs are saved on CD-ROM, be sure to label and store the disks appropriately.

## Preserving Chapter History

Whether your chapter was chartered one hundred years ago or last semester, you will have certain documents, photographs and artifacts that are irreplaceable and which should be cared for properly. As time goes on, many of the documents pertaining to significant moments in your chapter's history (such as your charter) will begin to age and will become brittle or faded. One way to guard against this is to store precious documents in acid-free envelopes or folders. Older documents that have already begun to fade can be deacidified and preserved in a number of ways. Special materials for the storage of photographs and negatives will keep them from fading.

**Care and preservation of important documents, photographs and documents**

A number of archival supply companies can supply you with the materials necessary to preserve your chapter's history and also to preserve important materials from the present for future generations. You can request archival product catalogues or order online from the following companies:

Gaylord Brothers: 1-800-634-6307  
<http://archival.gaylord.com/>

University Products: 1-800-628-1912  
<http://www.archivalsuppliers.com/>

**Sending materials of historical interest to the National Headquarters**

If your chapter has materials that might be of historic interest to the national Fraternity, please send copies to the National Historian c/o the National Headquarters. Individual chapters (especially the older ones) often have valuable pieces of history that helps to offer important insight into the Fraternity's past.

## PREPARING AN ANNUAL SCRAPBOOK/YEARBOOK

Collecting and organizing news and photographs pertaining to the chapter's history is just one aspect of the historian's job. He must also arrange the history so that it is easily accessible. Moreover, it must be in a format that allows for easy presentation. Most historians work on this project all year long, even though they don't actually put the chapter yearbook together until late in the school year. This final project is very important in the chapter's history. Don't overlook it!

**Arrangement**

The most common way to arrange the yearbook is chronologically. There are other ways, however, such as grouping them by activities (social functions, musical activities, probationary membership activities, special events, etc.). No matter which way you choose to arrange the material, make sure that the arrangement will be clear to those who will follow next year and ten years from now.

**What to Include**

Every photograph taken during the year? Probably not. For the sake of presentation, any one year's activities should not span several volumes of various scrapbooks. One of the roles of the historian is to decide what will be included and what will simply be left in the files. Include only what is necessary to tell the story of the current year's chapter history, and make sure what is not included is filed away in the chapter's archives (something that does not seem worth saving today might be a very important piece of history in the future). Keep the materials balanced (don't include twenty photographs of one activity and only one or two of another). Always be aware that brothers will be looking through the yearbooks for many years to come. Don't include items which have meaning only today. If you feel something is important, but you doubt future brothers will understand it, explain the situation or story in writing. The chapter yearbook should be fun, meaningful, and historical.

The Chapter Historian usually works with other chapter members to complete the annual scrapbook. A scrapbook not only serves as a method to keep a historical record of chapter activities, but it can also serve as an effective recruiting tool. Potential members can look through a scrapbook and get a full understanding of what the chapter accomplishes each year. Some hints for an eye-catching scrapbook include:

- Be creative, but use the traditional scrapbook form.
- Do not include any pictures with alcoholic beverages (bottles, cans, or cups indicating alcohol) or disrespectful poses.

- Pictures should have a short caption explaining the event and the naming people shown. (identify as brother, probationary member, guest, etc.).
- Make sure the pictures and captions tell a story about chapter activities throughout the entire school year.
- Remember that people looking at the scrapbook may not know anything about the chapter, the school, chapter members, etc. Do not use "inside jokes" or assume the reader will know what activity is shown in a picture.

## RESEARCHING AND COMPILING CHAPTER HISTORY

Another role of the Chapter Historian is to research and compile the chapter's history. Information not included in your chapter's archives may be contained in your chapter's file at the National Headquarters (another reason to send in regular reports of your chapter's activities to the National Headquarters) or in the Fraternity's historical archives. When compiling chapter history, especially for events such as significant anniversaries, consider traveling to the National Headquarters to find information that may not be found in your chapter's files.

The record of your chapter's history is not limited to documents and other written materials; much of it is retained in the minds of your chapter's alumni. A great deal of your chapter's history that cannot be found in writing can be compiled by interviewing alumni who were significant in the life of the chapter and preserving these interviews as recordings and type-written transcripts.

## GIVING HISTORICAL PRESENTATIONS

### Keeping the History Alive

The historian is the keeper of much knowledge and insight about the chapter's past and present. At the chapter level, as well as the national level, the history of the Fraternity must be kept alive by teaching and sharing it with others. New members, old members, and even non-members should constantly be reminded of our history. The historian must possess a great urge to learn more about the history of his chapter and the Fraternity. After gathering this information, he must share it with others in historical writings, photographs, and verbal presentations.

### When to Share

There are many great opportunities for the Chapter Historian to share his knowledge. Like any meaningful activity, these historical presentations must be well-planned and organized. Don't trivialize the history or bore others by doing a half-hearted job. Take pride in your presentation.

Several good opportunities for the Chapter Historian to share his knowledge are:

- Founder's Day
- Chapter Day
- Alumni events
- Interest meetings for prospective members
- During the time probationary members are learning the history of Sinfonia and when they are studying chapter history.

## SUMMARY

Researching and compiling past history is important, but Sinfonia's history must also be recorded *in the present*. A great portion of Sinfonia's history is comprised of the history of individual chapters, and this brings a renewed level of importance and responsibility upon Chapter Historians. The office of Chapter Historian requires a man who is consistently organized and thorough and who is aware of the duties of the office. It is hoped that this guide has helped to clarify the responsibilities of the Chapter Historian and to assist him in fulfilling his duties.





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