

CHAPTER HISTORIAN PRIMER

June 2025

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This primer/manual has been developed to assist APCO chapters to establish a Chapter Historian and Historical Committee to define, identify and ensure the preservation of Chapter and APCO historical documents and /or memorabilia; and to provide guidance for members to submit such documents and/or memorabilia to the Bradley University Special Collections Library and/or the APCO Virtual Museum.

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Chapter 1

“Why Is a Chapter Historian Needed?”

Within most Chapters, outgoing officers pass to their successors a thumb drive, a chapter owned laptop, and/or a box containing the accumulated records. This accumulation of documents can grow to overwhelming proportions. Office holders may not require these records to perform the job; however, they may be historically significant to the chapter.

Unfortunately, officers may resign without transferring documents. Members may forget items of significance; damaged or destroyed in damp basements or garages, lost, accidentally tossed out or missing. Officers have even thrown out damaged items, rather than risk the embarrassment of explaining how the damage occurred while in their custody.

These items tell a story about the enthusiasm and dedication of people who laid the foundations for the current organization. The Chapter’s historic legacy should be available to guide other chapter members in the future. The more efficient the chapter becomes at preserving these records, the more likely its membership will rally behind and support the effort.

You might now be thinking, “What’s the use – our chapter’s stuff like that is already lost forever?” It is important to remember that while documents or artifacts may be missing, they might not be lost forever. Once a Chapter historical collection is started and the members are aware of it, they may start attempting to locate items of historical significance on their own. The Illinois Chapter is an excellent example. Their Chapter Charter was lost and then found after their historical collection efforts began. If chapters do not actively work to preserve their records more will disappear over time.

There is a very practical reason to maintain and organize historical records: when members are nominated for Senior or Life membership status, the nominating chapter’s officers must submit conclusive documentation proving the member’s eligibility for the honor. Ask your officers if they have already had to prepare one of those letters of justification and if they have all the necessary information readily available for future nominees. Organizing these records will also make creating “Silent Key” tribute articles easier when the time comes.

“What is Historical?”

Everything has historical value - obviously, some more than others. It is especially important for individual chapters to have their own historical archives. Documents are normally maintained by responsible chapter leaders and then transferred to the chapter historical archives as specified by chapter policies.

The following list represents documents maintained by the Chapter Secretary:

- Chapter Governance Documents: Constitutions, Bylaws and Policy Manuals
 - Requests for amendments to Chapter Governance documents
 - Chapter leadership (board or committee) reviews and endorsement (minutes)
 - Current and historical governing documents maintain a copy in PSConnect.
- Chapter Charter
- Chapter Articles of Incorporation and Annual Reports (if incorporated)
- Minutes of all meetings for three years Posted on the Chapter's section of PSConnect.
- Election records
- Important e-mails and correspondences

The following list represents documents maintained by the Chapter Treasurer:

- Chapter rebate report from APCO accounting department.
- Chapter bank account statements for a minimum of three years (digital).
- Financial reports in their original form as presented at each Chapter meeting.
- Bond documents if applicable
- Tax filings
- Money market (other investment) statements

Additional items of historic value:

- Listing/record of Chapter/Affiliate Officers and dates served.
- Photos and other memorabilia
- Chapter conferences and regional meeting(s)
 - Chapter banner
 - Programs
 - Tickets
 - Significant legislation or resolutions
 - Information dated specifically to an event.
- Chapter projects such as:
 - CPRA's Telecommunicator Week Buttons
 - APCO Scholarships, Grants, etc.
 - Chapter Committee goals/deliverables (newsletters, events, etc.)
- Campaign memorabilia of Chapter members who ran for or elected to the APCO International Board of Officers.
- Any documentation marking milestones in chapter history.

This is a good starting point for your historical collection. The Chapter must make sure to retain documents as specified by law or policy, but for the purposes of a historical collection, keep all these items in perpetuity unless otherwise advised by your legal counsel.

Chapter Historical Committee

In accordance with Article III of the APCO Policy Manual, APCO Chapters are encouraged to establish a Historical Committee. The chapter board should appoint one Member as Chapter Historian.

The committee's and Chapter Historian's duties may be spelled out in the chapter's governance documents with words similar to “actively research, compile and maintain the records and history of this chapter and the association” and/or “The appointed chair of this committee shall be the chapter's liaison to the association's Historical Committee.”

Some chapters have combined the responsibilities of a Chapter Historian with the duties of another elected chapter officer position. These board officers carry a considerable workload and will not be able to manage both jobs adequately. Members selected for Chapter historical committees are traditionally among the most senior members in the chapter. A common selection criterion is the ability to relate to APCO history and to write or talk about experiences they witnessed. Committee members should have a sincere love for APCO and what the association stands for, as well as enjoy the challenge of finding and gathering documentation for the Chapter's history collection.

Duties of the Chapter Historian and Historical Committee:

- Locate, consolidate, and transfer Chapter documents to digital format for storage. Of special importance: meeting minutes, conference or event records, and photographs. Establish safe storage of digital records for future historians.
- Locate, catalog, and photograph historic items such as the Chapter charter or memorabilia and recommend an appropriate permanent location for the chapter's historic items/articles.
- Promote the chapter's historical goals with other Chapter members and non-members alike encouraging them to use the collection materials appropriately during Chapter events.

With over 26-years of experience, the Illinois APCO Historical Collection has already accumulated duplicate magazine issues, image files, records, filing aids and other items, with the intent to share them with other chapters. The APCO history Web site, www.apcohistory.org, can also help promote your chapter's efforts. In addition, that Web site's searchable index to all articles from the past APCO magazine issues can be helpful to everyone using your own magazine collection.

The Historical Committee of APCO International will assign one of their members to assist local Chapters to establish and maintain a Chapter Historical Committee.

Planning for Chapter Events

The Chapter Historian and Historical Committee should work closely with their Chapter Board or committees responsible for planning Chapter Events. Depending on what you will be displaying, the Committee in charge of planning will need to know ahead of time what you need (i.e., Space for display items or time for a PowerPoint presentation.).

Once a display of historic items is set-up, the Historical Committee will need to ensure that the display is secure by putting it inside a protective showcase or having the display location staffed by a committee member. All Committee members should clearly understand expectations.

Ideas For Display

- Scrapbooks (digital or paper)
- PowerPoint presentations
- Static displays of vintage equipment
- Interactive displays such as Chapter trivia game

Contests To Draw Interest

Make it fun and interesting for members using contests to spur interest in Chapter history. Try an interactive game using the venue's various locations, exhibit areas, or classrooms. Make copies of historic photos and have attendees play "Do You Know Me." Correct answers get a small prize like a free soda or bag of peanuts.

Create games that support the theme of your conference or event.



Invitation to Change

By J. Rhett McMillian Jr. • APCO Past President & Former Executive Director

Alfred North Whitehead once said that the art of progress is to preserve order amid change and to preserve change amid disorder. Former California Governor Jerry Brown said that what we need is a flexible plan for an ever-changing world. Those two statements locate APCO in the present scheme of things.

The September 1, 1993, evaluation report on the APCO-International, Inc. structure and operation, made by the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), was even more direct: It's time for APCO to again contemplate its navel. ASAE is considered foremost in its field.

You'll be hearing much more about the ASAE report and Association actions being taken as its consequence. An APCO Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) was appointed to vision and plan in these matters. SPC members will each report on specific areas under separate consideration. You will hear more about the SPC and its work shortly. This is a major effort.

President-Elect Steve Proctor and this writer (APCO Past President and who was APCO's first Executive

Director) were assigned to work on recommendations regarding possible restructuring of the Association. The author of this article is responding to a request by the SPC to place the present effort in historical perspective.

APCO was formed in 1935 by a bunch of blue uniforms responding to a need so direct it hurt: How to exchange information among jurisdictions in such a timely manner that criminals using fast modern automobiles (of the era) could be apprehended in flight. The new contraption known as radio was the answer.

So, the guys quickly elected officers and then got on with the main job of designing means and procedures. Ten-signals, message forms, relaying and station lists were originated. Little did they suspect the other whirlwinds they would be caught up in. *To Page 12*

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APCO members built the first land mobile two-way radios and systems. Industry and the FCC stepped in. The battle for spectrum was joined, and technology forced changes in concepts and planning. A more effective APCO organization was necessary. State and local government officials began clamoring for radios in other of their functions.

APCO had to be more representative. The GREAT BATTLE for changing the name and objectives of the Association began.

Friends screamed at friends. States fumed at states, and officials wrung their hands.

The angels in blue threatened everybody who didn't wear a shield pinned to a uniform. It was simply the end of the world. APCO was doomed.

When need is apparent, order prevails. Active membership requirements were amended at a national Conference, and the name was changed from "Police" to "Public Safety." The name was changed back to "Police" at the very next year's Conference. Then, the name was changed back to "Public Safety" again at the following year's Conference. This time it stuck. How senseless, and yet how so necessarily evolutionary, it all seems now. Three years of debate. All done in good faith.

Then came the need for a fixed national office. Another great battle was joined. The office was finally started. How senseless, too, was this argument when viewed from this date. Again, it was all done in good faith. Argument helps restate the problem and points to better means.

ASAE now says, hey, APCO members, you've done well in the past, but the future is upon you. It's time you moved on again. Those footsteps you hear coming up from the rear will trample you if you don't keep moving. You're now preparing to be a world player. You've got to prove that you're going to continue to be competent in meeting fast-moving challenges at home. What better way is there to prove that you can do as well anywhere?

The only purpose of this little history lesson is to prepare you for the fact that you're not the only APCO member who has faced such important decisions.

There's a message that shines steadfastly through those past tumultuous days. Your predecessors, no matter their personal feelings, listened, read and took part.

They made difficult decisions based on facts rather than on emotions.

You're going to be getting such facts in your own time. As the months pass, you, yourself,

are going to be making APCO history. You're going to do that by carefully considering all the information you'll be reading in the APCO Bulletin. There will be debates you'll take part in at Chapter, Regional and Annual Conferences.

Isn't that something?! Make your plans now to attend coming APCO functions. This next year will be so interesting that APCO meeting attendance probably will double. In the meantime, watch the Bulletin.

Isn't it exciting?!

Read, listen and attend.

You're a player! ■

Invitation to Change

J. Rhett McMillian Jr. has a long, distinguished involvement with APCO, serving as its President in 1965-66 while the communications director with the law enforcement branch of Florida's Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission and other agencies. He retired in 1970 to become APCO's first Executive Director and to establish a permanent Association office in New Smyrna Beach, Florida, his home. While APCO President, he also served as APCO Bulletin editor. An accomplished author, he wrote "The Primer of Public Safety Telecommunication Systems," an easy-to-understand, non-technical book. He now is serving on the APCO Strategic Planning Committee.



Chapter 2

APCO International History Online

The Historical Committee introduced the Online Museum to members during the APCO Annual Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota and was the culmination of approximately twenty plus years of challenging work for the APCO Historical Committee and the APCO Past and Present Historians.

To access APCO International History web page:

1. Access the primary website: apcointl.org.
2. Choose About APCO from topline menu.
3. Scroll down to “Our History” and click on “More” which opens the apcohistory.org website
 - a. General information about APCO history and development
 - b. Link to APCO History Makers Video Series
 - c. Link to APCO History Site: apcohistory.org
 - d. Link to the APCO Virtual Museum Search site: apco.pastperfectonline.com
 - e. Link to the APCO Virtual Museum submission form

APCO Virtual Museum Submission and Search

When considering what types of photographs to submit to the virtual museum, consider dedication of a building, equipment, chapter activities, special award presentations, or unusual gatherings of people related to public safety legislation or community involvement.

Name all the people in the photograph. The photo should be the property of the submitter, or the submitter has permission from the owner to submit. Include the date and place and any other pertinent information along with the photograph (attached with the Submission Form via file upload) and forward to APCO.

At this time, historical objects are stored by the Chapter in their original location and not sent into APCO Headquarters or the Bradley library.

To submit a picture from the APCO History Webpage link

1. Click on “Submit an item to the online museum” to open the form.
 - Note: All fields marked with an asterisk (*) must be completed.
 - Example **highlights** shown here identify those keywords used for entry and later search.
2. Enter “Object Name” and “Object Description”
 - Be specific and accurate when naming and provide a detailed description.
 - Name and description can be used to search for photos stored in the museum.
 - Items may include photos of dated and labeled mugs, plaques, or banners.
 - For example, we will use the NC Chapter of APCO Past Presidents Plaque to illustrate how to make entries.
 - Description Example: **Plaque** made for the **50th Anniversary** of the **North Carolina Chapter** of APCO to honor the Chapter’s 50 **Past Presidents**.

3. Upload “Your Picture” using accepted file types (.jpg, .png, .jpeg, .tiff, pdf, or .max)
4. Enter “Historical/Relevance value to Public Safety.”
 - Explain why this object has historical value.
 - Be as detailed and specific as possible.
 - List locations, events, people, situations, what its related to or with.
 - Example: The **North Carolina** Chapter of APCO was one of the early chapters and has a rich history within the Association. This **Plaque** is one of five made for the **50th Anniversary Celebration** designating Chapter Past Presidents, **National APCO Past Presidents** from North Carolina, National APCO Life Members, Chapter Life Members and Chapter Senior Members. Circa: Presented in **2012**. All Plaques are now stored at the home of NC Chapter of APCO Historian **Randy Surratt**.
5. Enter/Choose “Date” the object was used by the chapter, made, or the photo taken.
 - When unknown, enter a month/day/year representing the Circa of the object.
 - Add the more detailed circa information in the “Historical Value” field.
 - Example: 01/01/2012 for the plaque with the explanation in the description.
6. Enter a “Caption for Picture of Object” This can be the same as the object name.
7. Enter “Name of person/agency submitting photo of object.”
8. Enter “Chapter Name or Affiliation”
9. Check the data usage terms agreement.
10. By clicking “Submit” you verify that you are the legal owner of the item(s) represented in the photo submitted to the APCO Virtual Museum.
11. Your item should appear on the museum site within ten to fourteen business days.
12. To enter multiple items either take a photo of all the items or (as in our example) enter the four remaining plaques separately (a submission form entry for each).



To search the APCO Virtual Museum: From the APCO International History web page click on “Visit the online museum.” The Virtual Museum home page will open giving tips for searching.

1. Select a Search type from the topline menu.
 - a. Keyword Search – general search across multiple fields. The APCO staff catalogues and categorizes submissions into collections making it easier to conduct a search for a specific event or group.
 - Search by Chapter
 - Search by conference bags
 - Search by Collectible
 - Search by Biography
 - b. Search by Term –selects a term such as “radio equipment” to search.
 - c. Advanced Search – search for a word or phrase within a specific category or categories
 - d. Random Images – browse the museum collection.
 - e. Archives, Photos, and Objects – categorize the search to those areas.
2. Enter the keyword, term, photo, or object name, then click “Search”