

The logo consists of a solid red square with the text "SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS" in white, uppercase, sans-serif font centered within it.

**SOCIETY OF
ARCHITECTURAL
HISTORIANS**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS**

The Society of Architectural Historians (SAH) invites nominations and applications for the position of Executive Director. Established in 1940, SAH supports scholarly excellence in the field of architectural history, broadly defined in terms of topic and methodology, and promotes meaningful public engagement with the insights that emerge from that scholarship. Through its state-of-the-art peer-reviewed scholarly journal to its digital archive of over 155,000 images to its annual international conference, SAH connects scholars, architects, historic preservationists, teachers, students, writers, curators, public historians, independent scholars, and other individuals from around the world.

SAH invites a creative, strategic, and dynamic leader to advance the Society's mission and lead nearly 3,000 members in defining the organization's role during a critical phase as it approaches its centennial. Reporting to an engaged Board of Directors and directing an exceptionally talented and hard-working staff, the next Executive Director will collaboratively shape a compelling vision and strategic plan for the future of SAH as an inclusive, global home for scholars of the built environment and related disciplines.

The next Executive Director must bring a passion for the history of the built environment to collaborations across diverse constituencies. They are expected to have prior senior-level administrative or management experience in complex organizational contexts, exceptional communication skills, the capacity to be a successful fundraiser, and strong business and financial acumen. Responsibilities include identifying avenues for and implementing the support, growth, and diversification of SAH membership and participating communities, and expanding the resources—financial and otherwise—to position SAH for continued long-term stability and sustainability.

Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, has been engaged to assist with this search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT SAH

The Society of Architectural Historians is an internationally focused membership organization headquartered in Chicago for people who are professionally or personally invested in the history of the built environment. SAH is one of the oldest and largest professional organizations that supports scholarly approaches to documenting and interpreting the history of architecture, landscapes, and townscapes/cityscapes worldwide in all time periods.

Membership

SAH currently has approximately 2,300 individual members and 600 institutional members in 54 countries. SAH members also convene through 19 thematic and regional chapters, and eight affiliate groups. Each affiliate group focuses on a common interest, scholarly or otherwise, including Architectural Studies, Asian American and Diasporic Architectural History, Climate Change and Architectural History, Globalizing Architectural History Education, Historic Interiors, Minority Scholars, Race and Architectural History, and Women in Architecture. Individuals can choose to be members only of a particular affiliate group, although most are also members of the Society.

Activities

SAH promotes meaningful public engagement with the history of the built environment through advocacy efforts, print and online publications, and local, national, and international programs. SAH organizes an annual international conference, one of the foremost venues for presenting scholarship on the built environment. The annual conference encompasses scholarly papers, tours, plenary talks, social events, and a symposium on the host city. In 2023, the [annual conference](#) will be held in two formats and at two times of the year: in person (April 12-16, 2023 in Montreal, Canada) and virtual (September 20-22, 2023). In addition to the annual conference, SAH engages its members and others through the following activities:

- Publishing the [Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians](#) (JSAH), a highly regarded, peer-reviewed quarterly journal
- Publishing [SAH Archipedia](#), an open-access encyclopedia of United States architecture and landscapes
- Commissioning [Buildings of the United States](#) (BUS), an [award-winning series](#) of books on architecture in the United States
- Publishing [SAHARA](#), a digital archive of over 155,000 images of the built environment for teaching and research
- Hosting in-person and online programming throughout the year through [SAH CONNECTS](#) and programs initiated by its affiliate groups.
- Awarding many [prizes, grants, and fellowships](#) that recognize the highest achievements in the field and that support research on the history of the built environment
- Sustaining the next generation of architectural historians through [robust programs](#) created for and by graduate students and emerging scholars, including the Graduate Student Lighting Talks at the annual conference, the Method Acts workshops, and the Global Architectural History Teaching Collaborative (GAHTC) Teacher-to-Teacher Workshop

Leadership and Governance

SAH depends on the commitment and dedication of its members to ensure the vitality of its programs. The Executive Director reports to a 30-member Board of Directors, including five elected officers: President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. These officers and 15 elected directors have fiduciary and administrative responsibility for the Society. The Board also has ten ex-officio members, including the Executive Director as well as journal editors and the chairs of standing committees. The elected officers and ex-officio members comprise the Society's Executive Committee.

There are many opportunities for members to engage in the Society’s work and governance, including committees, affiliate groups, and chapters. SAH has multiple standing and ad hoc committees that support the Society and its staff by advising on matters of process, finance, and content. The Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accountability, Sustainability (IDEAS) committee is the newest, formed in January 2020. The SAH IDEAS committee shapes, supports, and informs the Society’s interrogation of structures of power and helps the Society maintain a strong commitment to sociopolitical equity and environmental justice.

Charnley-Persky House

The SAH Executive Director also serves as Executive Director of the Charnley-Persky House Museum Foundation, a separate 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization that was created in 1998 to own and manage the Charnley-Persky House, a National Historic Landmark building that serves as SAH’s headquarters. Designed by Louis Sullivan with assistance from his junior draftsman, Frank Lloyd Wright, the Charnley-Persky House is recognized as a pivotal work of modern American architecture. The house is named, in part, after collector and philanthropist Seymour H. Persky who donated the funds to SAH to buy it in 1995.

THE ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Executive Director is SAH’s chief executive officer, serving as its outward-facing ambassador and working closely with the various constituencies within the Society—including the Executive Committee, Board of Directors, and membership—to develop and implement a creative vision as well as strategic goals for the organization. The Executive Director works with SAH leadership to set fundraising priorities, acts as a steward of the Society’s assets including its \$7 million endowment, and manages the organization’s \$1.6 million budget.

In addition, the Executive Director is responsible for the ongoing operations of the Society, assists in writing and executing policies, assesses the viability of new projects or publications for Board approval, carries out directives of the Executive Committee and Board, and performs other such duties as the Executive Committee and Board may identify. The Executive Director represents SAH on the American Council of Learned Societies’ [Conference of Executive Officers](#).

The Executive Director leads a team of six talented and dedicated staff members to support the work and mission of the Society. In addition to the Executive Director, the full-time staff of SAH includes the Director of Membership, Director of Communications, Comptroller, SAH Archipedia Managing Editor, Director of Development, and Director of Programs.

LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE NEXT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This is an exciting moment for SAH. The organization is approaching a consequential moment of transition as its highly respected Executive Director steps down after nearly three decades in the role and the Society considers how to continue to advance its critical work nationally and internationally while creating a more inclusive community. The organization requires an Executive Director with a creative and expansive vision, business acumen, and a consultative approach to leadership. Key opportunities and challenges for the next Executive Director include:

Collaboratively developing a compelling strategic plan for the future of SAH and leading its implementation

Working closely with the Board and incorporating perspectives from the staff and the broader membership, the Executive Director will play an active role in the development of a strategic plan for SAH's future. This process began in 2021, and a committee has been formed and started gathering information to inform its work. The strategy should be innovative and forward-looking, building on the Society's recognized position as a leading scholarly association for the study of the built environment while considering the varied and diverse needs of its ever-evolving membership and community, both within the academy and beyond it. Through this strategic planning process, the Executive Director should have an eye toward prioritization, ensuring programs are aligned to the Society's mission and values, and consider the governance structure of the Society to ensure it is inclusive yet nimble.

Serving as a strategic and transparent communicator internally and externally

The Executive Director will be a skilled communicator, both internally to the Society's membership and externally to other audiences. Internally, the Executive Director will ensure transparent and timely communication across and between the staff, Board, committees, affiliate groups, chapters, and the membership. The Executive Director will prioritize the accessibility of relevant information to the Society's large and diverse membership, ensuring that members are aware of and included in the various activities and opportunities provided by the Society. Externally, this leader will serve as an advocate for the Society, the field of architectural history and its relevance for contemporary concerns, and its many related professions. In doing so, the Executive Director will raise the visibility of not only the Society, but also the broader field.

Continuing to grow and diversify the membership

Over the years, the membership of SAH has grown to include scholars, architects, historic preservationists, teachers, students, writers, curators, public historians, independent scholars, and other individuals from around the world. The Executive Director will partner with the Board, staff, and membership to identify avenues to support and grow the membership of the Society, continuously pursuing a more global and inclusive SAH.

Championing diversity, equity, and inclusion across SAH and its related professions

The Executive Director will bring a steadfast commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion to all aspects of their work within and on behalf of the Society, promoting an understanding of architecture as a historical practice that intersects with power and society and envisioning architectural history in its most inclusive and intersectional sense. The Executive Director has an opportunity to build inclusive structures and processes while developing community expertise and mutual mentorship within and beyond SAH membership. In addition, the Executive Director is expected to create an organizational culture that elevates scholars within the Society whose self-identification or work represents previously under-recognized and/or unsupported directions for architectural history—including scholars outside of the United States—and supports scholarship and publications by women, particularly women of color, whose output has been most significantly affected by the pandemic.

Increasing financial resources and positioning SAH for long-term financial stability and sustainability

The Executive Director must be a skillful grant-seeker and fundraiser, building relationships and identifying opportunities to work with different types of funders and non-grant funding sources to further diversify SAH's revenue streams and position the organization for long-term financial stability and sustainability. The transition to a new Executive Director and SAH's ongoing strategic planning process present compelling opportunities to contemplate and pursue new sources of funding—from individual donors, foundations, and/or revenue-producing initiatives—that sustain SAH's core programs and provide seed money for self-sustaining new activities that are closely connected to the organization's mission and vision.

Leading and supporting a talented and committed team

The dedicated SAH staff provide exceptional resources and services to the membership, and the longevity of the staff is a testament to the Society's positive organizational culture. The Executive Director will serve as an inspiring and collaborative leader for this high-performing team, ensuring that a collegial and supportive dynamic continues to thrive in a newly-hybrid working environment.

QUALIFICATIONS

The successful candidate will bring many of the following professional qualifications and personal qualities:

- An engagement with the history of the built environment across national and/or international contexts and an understanding of the wide range of issues addressed in contemporary scholarship
- Prior senior administrative or management experience, with evidence of leadership that demonstrates integrity and transparency
- Demonstrated knowledge of 501(c)(3) organizations and the non-profit landscape
- Experience with high-level strategic planning
- Exceptional writing, public speaking, and digital literacy skills
- Ability to collaborate and communicate across varied and diverse constituencies, including elected leadership bodies, staff, volunteers, and donors
- Demonstrated fundraising success, or the capacity to be a strong fundraiser
- Strong business and financial acumen, with experience managing large and complex budgets
- Demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and building inclusive organizational cultures
- Demonstrated ability to be adaptable, flexible, and creative
- Eligibility to work in the United States

SAH operates in a hybrid office environment. The next Executive Director may be based in the Chicago area or may work remotely, but a regular presence at the SAH headquarters in Chicago will be required.

TO APPLY

Applications, nominations, and inquiries should be submitted electronically and in confidence to:

Jeff Kessner, Partner
Kelly McLaughlin, Senior Associate
Isaacson, Miller
<https://www.imsearch.com/8617>

Compensation is commensurate with experience with a minimum annual salary of \$140,000.

The Society of Architectural Historians is an equal opportunities employer and positively encourages applications from suitably qualified and eligible candidates regardless of sex, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender, gender reassignment, religion or belief, marital status, or pregnancy and maternity.