

**That Was Then and This Is Now: Plain Talk about the Future of Public Folklore**  
**Association of Western States Folklore Annual Meeting**  
**Virginia City, Nevada**

**Monday, April 11**

**9am-10:00 am: Welcomes and introductions**

**Overview/Scan of the Environment. Shaping a Framework for Discussion**

Borrowing from systems theory, Betsy will use a framework of adaptive cycles (growth, conservation, release/destruction, rebirth/reorganization) to outline systemic changes in the current social/political/economic context of our work. Betsy will focus on broad external forces and trends affecting our lives and identify ways they are specifically evident in or affecting our field now, with specific emphasis on:

-*Demographics/Globalization*. The communities we work with are more diverse, more mobile, porous. How do we think about tradition, identity, community, pop culture in this context?

-*Technology and Communications*. Analog to Digital. Seismic change and permanent realignment in communication method and style. Interactive and immediate.

-*The Social Contract is Changing/has changed*

Rise of neo-liberal/free market approaches. Privatization, devolution and decentralization. Public resources, institutions and services are shrinking; nonprofit models are fragile. New ways of working.

What are the new business models? How do we work to ensure the viability of the profession?

-*Disintermediation/Rise of Participatory Culture and "Networked Individualism"*

(cutting out the middleman; contesting curatorial and gatekeeping authority; entrepreneurial innovation; expert vs. lay knowledge. How does this affect the folklorist's interpretive role and our notions of folklore and tradition as community activity? How do we talk more forcefully and directly about change and creativity?

**10:00-10:15 Break**

**10: 15-11:15: Opportunities for the Future: The ways we think and talk about folklore**

Dominant threads of our work have emphasized legacy, heritage, preservation, survivalist rationales; traditions fully formed and codified vs. traditions as they emerge; individual artists and creativity in service of community and tradition vs. community and tradition as resources for individual creativity. The dominant contexts of our work have been the arts and humanities, but new and more diverse areas are opening up. How do we talk and think about folklore in these new contexts? How do we characterize the work and skills of folklorists?

**11:15-12:15pm: Opportunities for the Future: The ways we do our work**

Ways of working: curatorial functions vs. facilitating functions; sharing authority. What are emerging business models? Are identifiable best practices emerging?

Are the institutional contexts of our work changing?

**12:15-1:45pm Lunch break**

**1:45-2:45pm: Opportunities for the Future: The ways we access (and think about) resources**

-Public funding across the board is shrinking and subject to volatile political cycles. What about private sources? Sources in other fields? Social media sources? Other business models. Building relationships with individual supporters.

**2:45-3:45pm: Opportunities for the Future: Who we network with and how we network**

Considering partners and types of networks. What kinds of networking strategies characterize our field? How can we more effectively strengthen and connect our networks and use them strategically to expand?

**3:45-4:00 Break**

**4:00-5:30 pm: What is the role of AWSF?** What are the specific concerns of western folklorists? Is institutional support more fragile in the west? How can an informal regional organization like AWSF meet the needs of a profession that works increasingly in diverse contexts? How can we more effectively leverage individual creativity, regional networks, collaborations and opportunities?

**Tuesday, April 12**

**8:30-10:00am - Strategic Planning wrap up: Last Thoughts and Next Steps**

How do we grow the opportunities and the field? How do we continue the conversation? Revisiting the role of AWSF.