

Teaching History Every Day to Everyone

by W. Todd Groce, Ph.D.

How do you teach Georgia history every day, 365 days a year, and potentially reach every man, woman and child in the state? You develop your own radio and television program and supplement it with a robust, content-rich website.

That's exactly what the Georgia Historical Society and Georgia Public Broadcasting have done!

Today in Georgia History (TIGH) is a daily, collaboratively-produced, multimedia program that selects an important event or person in the state's past and succinctly and engagingly tells the story and its larger relevance to the present in 90 seconds.

Funded for the first year by a \$900,000 grant from the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation, TIGH builds on the unique strengths of each partner. The trusted authority on our state's history, GHS selects the topic for each day, creates the content (scripts and images) and hosts the program. As the third largest PBS system in the nation in viewership, GPB has the technology and expertise to turn this material into a first-rate production and deliver it to millions. The final product is as visually appealing and professionally produced as anything found on commercial television and makes history accessible on a scale previously unimaginable.

One objective of the program is to enhance classroom instruction by giving teachers a way to piqué student interest and stir the imagination. Once students are engaged by the television program, online tools (created by GHS) aligned with Georgia Performance Standards are available for teachers and students to further explore that day's topic.

Our other goal is to challenge all audiences, young and old, to see the past in a new way. Each segment is based on the best modern scholarship, focuses on a single subject and explains its importance to the world as it exists today. In other words, we're giving audiences real history—not trivia—making it relevant to them.

The face (and voice) of TIGH and the primary creator of its content is the program's host, GHS Senior Historian Dr. Stan Deaton. Stan has degrees in both journalism and history, so he knows what to say and how to say it. He combines his training as a journalist, historian and teacher with a style that keeps audiences coming back for more. The entire state has become his classroom.

And that's no exaggeration. During the program's first five weeks, 2,875,500 Georgians (30 percent of the total population) watched or listened to TIGH, according to GPB President and CEO Teya Ryan. Teya speculates that if this trend continues for an aggregate of 50 weeks annually, we will reach 28,755,000 impressions for the first year and more than 86,265,000 for the full three years of the project.

So if you haven't seen or heard one of these segments, tune in to your local GPB television or radio station. You can find broadcast times, as well as programs you may have missed, at the website www.todayingeorgiahistory.org. I think you'll agree that this is one of the most effective means ever devised to teach history every day to everyone.

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