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A HISTORY OF THE MID-AMERICA CONFERENCE ON HISTORY

James N. Giglio¹

After conferring with colleagues, I created the Mid-America Conference on History (MACH) in 1977. At the time I was an associate professor of history at Southwest Missouri State University in Springfield, Missouri. The MACH sought to mirror other regional ventures such as the Northern Great Plains History Conference, which was established in 1966.² The motivation was similar for I had also experienced the high costs of attending national meetings of the Organization of American Historians or the American Historical Association held in cities such as New York, Philadelphia, or Washington, D.C. More importantly, the opportunity to present at national meetings proved difficult for junior faculty, especially from less prominent institutions. My vision was to create a smaller version of the Southern Historical Association (SHA) conference that drew primarily from middle America and that shared the same professional standards and intimate environment of the SHA.

¹ James N. Giglio received his Ph.D. at The Ohio State University in 1968 and taught at Missouri State University for thirty-nine years. He is the author of eight books, including the *Presidency of John F. Kennedy* (updated and revised edition, University Press of Kansas, 2006) and *Call Me Tom: The Life of Thomas F. Eagleton* (University Missouri Press, 2011).

² See William E. Lass, "Historical Sketch of the Northern Great Plains History Conference, 1966-2015," *Studies in Midwestern History* vol. 1, no. 8 (October 2015), 74-83.

None of this would have been possible without the support of the Southwest Missouri State University history department. Several professors especially stand out from those early years. They include the department head Wayne Bartee along with professors Dominic Capeci, David Adams, and Jere Krakow, as well as the department secretary, Georgia Brunner, and eventually department administrative assistant, Margie von der Heide. The university provided modest funding in 1977, and the Missouri Committee for the Humanities agreed to pay for the cost of the Friday evening speaker, John Blassigame of Yale University, who spoke on the "Black Literary Images of Slavery." Blassigame's presentation was at the university instead of the Howard Johnson's conference site some three miles away. A shuttle bus brought the conferees to the university for the Friday evening program. As in future conferences, all of the registration responsibilities were handled out of the department office, which involved myself, the department head, and the department secretary, as well as student helpers, which resulted in tremendous cost savings without the involvement of outside assistance.

The initial conference in 1977 was a modest success. Its expenses were well within reason despite asking only a \$2.00 registration fee for professors and \$1.00 for graduate students. There was no charge for the general public. The twenty sessions were well attended and they included such recognizable scholars as D. Clayton Brown of Texas Christian University, James Ronda and Fred Blue of Youngstown State University, Herman Hattaway and Lawrence Larsen of the University of Missouri-Kansas City, Evan Bukey and Randall Woods of the University of Arkansas, Leslie Owens of the University of Michigan, and William Van Deburg of the University of Wisconsin. Our instructions to session chairs and commentators regarding time limitations for two-paper and three-paper presenters were generally followed.

Still, improvements were in order for the next conference in 1979. This included the creation of a book exhibit. I made a determined effort to line up commercial presses such as Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich; Alfred A. Knopf; and a vast number of university presses, most notably, the University Press of Kansas, the University of Missouri Press, the University of Oklahoma Press, and the University of Kentucky Press. Over the years our book exhibits would expand substantially. Even though many did, press representatives were not required to attend since we agreed to display the books, handle the order forms, and advertisement booklets, which were sent back to the publishers. The local chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, the history honorary society, sold the donated books on campus, and the money derived from selling them went into its scholarship fund.

Other changes also occurred. Most important, we selected published scholars as session chairs and commentators so that presenters could receive valuable feedback on how to best proceed with their projects. In those early decades, we did our best to keep our own department members out of the various sessions in the tradition of other reputable regional conferences that drew nationally. We also included a very limited number of graduate student sessions, which we labeled Phi Alpha Theta sessions.

Beginning with the second Mid-America, the conference was also often expanded from a two- to a three-day affair so that more could participate. Again, the conference was given a September date to avoid scheduling conflicts with other history meetings and to take advantage of the greater availability of conference travel money existing at the beginning of the academic year. Finally, we decided that the conference would be held biennially to reduce the burden on the coordinator and the department in general. For the first time, I received a three-hour reduction from my twelve-hour teaching load for the fall semester of the conference year thereby setting a precedent for future coordinators from the department.

The 1979 MACH, again held in Springfield at the Howard Johnson's Convention Center, featured thirty-eight sessions. They covered virtually every aspect of the past including American, European, and Latin America history. There was also a session on the writing and teaching of Missouri history. Several well-known scholars again participated in the general sessions, including William Foley of Central Missouri State University, William Parrish of Mississippi State University, Hugh Davis of Southern Connecticut State University, Donald McCoy of the University of Kansas, Richard Lowitt of Iowa State University, Darlene Hine of Purdue University, Arvarh Strickland of the University of Missouri-Columbia, and David Colburn of the University of Florida.

The conferees were informed and entertained by keynoter Robert G. L. Waite of Williams College, who discussed the "Problems of Psychohistory: The Case of Adolph Hitler," on Thursday evening, Ann Firor Scott of Duke University, "Women's Place in the History Books," on Friday evening, and Richard S. Kirkendall, "A Piano Player in the White House (or Music in the Life of Harry S. Truman)" of Indiana University at the Saturday luncheon. The Missouri Committee for the Humanities sponsored the first two general sessions. The registration fees remained the same despite the two socials sponsored by the department.

Our history students were encouraged to attend without charge, and we provided shuttle bus service for them from the university to and from the conference site. From 1979 on, several hundred students took advantage of this opportunity at each of the meetings. Also attending were secondary social studies teachers. The local social studies coordinator provided substitutes, making it possible for forty teachers to be present. As he wrote me afterward, “the ultimate benefactors . . . will be the students of the teachers who were present in the various sessions.”³

Ironically, the 1979 conference was nearly cancelled two weeks before it began, which might have had a lasting effect on such a promising venture. The cause was the protracted Ozark Airlines strike, which ended commercial airline service to Springfield until after the conference. Nevertheless, with the assistance of Dominic Capeci primarily, we decided, with much trepidation, to contract with small charter aircraft operating out of Springfield and St. Louis, as well as working with the Greyhound bus company that served Springfield from the Kansas City and St. Louis airports. Somehow, we notified all of the conferees of the schedules we established in order to bring them to the conference site. Almost miraculously, it worked out with no major problems. I remember, however, getting a *Washington Post* clipping from Ann Firor Scott afterward that warned of the potential risks of riding on the similar small aircraft that brought her to Springfield.⁴

The third Mid-America Conference was again held in Springfield in 1981. Desiring to institutionalize the conference, I made the mistake of asking for a volunteer coordinator at our history department meeting. By the spring of 1981 little was done to create a program. As a result, department head Wayne Barteo and I had to intercede. The result was a two-day program with twenty-four general sessions and a much smaller book exhibit. A highlight nevertheless was James MacGregor Burns’s Friday evening address, “Why Presidents Fail in America.”

Sometime after the meeting Professor Donald McCoy, of the University of Kansas and the chief editor of the American Presidency Series, asked if his history department could sponsor the conference in the off year when we did not do it. McCoy, publisher of innumerable books, including biographies of Calvin Coolidge and Alf Landon, would become the most important professional person in my life. He was instrumental in my publishing the *Presidency of John F. Kennedy*

³ Owen Case to Dr. Duane Meyer, President, Southwest Missouri State University, September 24, 1979.

⁴ We received many complementary letters about how we handled the crisis. Some went to the university president. For example, Lyle Dorsett of the University of Denver wrote, “I was especially impressed with the efficient way [Giglio] saw to the transportation needs of those of us who had reservations with Ozark Air Lines.” Lyle Dorsett to Meyer, September 24, 1979.

in the American Presidency Series in 1991. The 1981 conference at KU replicated very favorably the conferences we sponsored in Springfield.

The fifth MACH returned to Springfield in 1983 with Wayne Bartee ably chairing the program. Wayne is the only Southwest Missouri State University department head to do so. The conference began on Thursday evening with a special session on "Harry Truman In Cartoon and Caricature" involving myself and my former student Greg Thielen of the Springfield, Missouri Art Museum.² Besides the twenty-three sessions, the program included the Friday evening address by Martin E. Marty of the University of Chicago Divinity School, "History: Socially Scientific and Humanely Humanistic."

In 1984 the conference returned to the University of Kansas with Donald McCoy again coordinating the program. The two-day affair, held in the university Memorial Union, included twenty-three general sessions, a Friday luncheon featuring Richard Kirkendall, then the Henry Wallace Professor of History at Iowa State University, whose address was on "Harry S. Truman and the Slow Growth of Modern Missouri." The Friday night banquet featured Herbert J. Ellison of the Smithsonian Institution. The topic of his talk was "From Moscow to Kiev: Ukraine Revisited."

After consulting with several past coordinators, I decided afterward to expand the conference to other institutions in the Midwest to lessen the burden of any one department too often hosting the conference as well as to broaden the base of support. The four university rotation would also now include Oklahoma State University and the University of Arkansas with the former beginning the new cycle in 1985.

Joe Stout coordinated Oklahoma State's first conference at the Sheraton Inn in Stillwater on September 19-21. In future conferences at Stillwater, it would be held in the combined campus hotel and convention center. In 1985 there was a pre-conference social in the Hospitality Room, Poolside on Thursday evening with sessions beginning at 9:00 the next morning. The program contained nineteen general sessions along with a luncheon and a dinner speaker. The former featured Timothy Donovan of the University of Arkansas, who entertained us with "Oh What a Beautiful Mornin': The Musical 'Oklahoma' and the Popular Mind in 1943." David Weber of Southern Methodist delivered the evening address, which he titled "Richard H. Kern: Expeditionary Artist in the Far Southwest, 1848-1853."

The following year, under the direction of Thomas Kennedy of the University of Arkansas, the eighth MACH was held at the Center for Continuing Education located on the Fayetteville town square. The two-day conference featured twenty general sessions, as well as Friday evening's banquet speaker Paul M. Kattenburg of the University of South Carolina, who informed us on "Reflections on Vietnam-Then and Now."

The ninth MACH hosted by Southwest Missouri State University took place at the Holiday Inn: University Plaza Hotel and Convention Center, a marvelous site just north of the university campus. Because of its subsequent elevated prices, it was the only time we could hold it there. Nevertheless, the 1987 meeting remains one of my favorite MACH conferences. The three-day program, which I chaired, focused on "Commemorating the Bicentennial of The Writing of the U.S. Constitution." Several general sessions of the thirty-two were devoted to the Constitution. The Thursday evening speaker was William E. Leuchtenburg of the University of North Carolina. He focused on "The Constitutional Revolution in Civil Liberties: The Second Bill of Rights" amid a packed audience. The well-attended luncheon speaker on Friday was Gerald D. Nash of the University of New Mexico, who selected the topic of "Reshaping America: The Constitution and Economic Development in the United States," followed by David Pinkney of the University of Washington that evening whose Constitutional effort related to "The Pursuit of Liberty and Order: Two Centuries of Constitutional Experiment in France and the United States, 1787-1987."

Professors Leuchtenburg's and Nash's addresses were funded by the College of Humanities and Social Sciences of Southwest Missouri State University, while Professor Pinkney's was handled by the Missouri Committee for the Humanities and Drury and Evangel colleges of Springfield. Although no attendance information remains, this undoubtedly was the most well-attended of all the MACH conferences thus far. The bicentennial theme of the conference contributed, as did the growing number of professors I have come to know by my attending or participating in other conferences and my involvement in the Advanced Placement Readings program. Some twenty-seven presses and publishers comprised our book exhibit, most likely a new high as well.

The rotation of the four universities continued in the next ten years beginning with the University of Kansas in 1988 with W. Stitt Robinson as coordinator, followed by Oklahoma State University with a program committee headed by Roger Biles in 1989, and the University of Arkansas in 1990 with Evan Bukey as coordinator.

In 1991 Southwest Missouri State University again hosted the MACH with Worth Robert (Bob) Miller in charge. It moved to the Ramada Inn on North Glenstone where it would always be held despite the name change to the Sheraton Hawthorn Park and then the DoubleTree hotels. The 1991 conference received a Missouri Humanities Council grant for the "Civil War in the Trans-Mississippi West" program created by Southwest Missouri State University history professor, William Piston. This included a Friday evening address by James M. McPherson of Princeton University titled "From Limited to Total War, 1861-1865," and Saturday morning sessions on "Aspects of the Civil War in Missouri" and "The Impact of the Civil War on Missouri." McPherson's Friday evening address drew an audience of about four hundred. Other speakers at the 1991 conference were Stephen Ambrose of the University of New Orleans, who spoke on "The Cold War in Perspective," and H. Wayne Morgan of the University of Oklahoma, who spoke on "The Historian as Detective." The conference had thirty-two sessions and twenty-eight book exhibits. As with all MACHs sponsored by Southwest Missouri University, the history department, the dean of humanities and public affairs, the vice president of academic affairs (later provost), and the president provided financial support for the conference, and various book publishers contributed financial aid for coffee breaks and receptions.

The MACH returned to the University of Kansas in 1992 with Dan Bays as coordinator, followed by Oklahoma State University with no listed coordinator in 1993, the University of Arkansas in 1994 with Daniel E. Sutherland at the helm, and Southwest Missouri State University with Bob Miller again as coordinator in 1995. The 1995 conference program committee, for the first time, compiled a head count, which indicated that 1,728 had attended the forty-eight sessions along with 208 scholars participating and 26 book publishers exhibiting.

The MACH added one additional university in 1996 when Bill Cecil-Fronsman requested that Washburn University of Kansas host the event in conjunction with the Kansas Historical Society and Kansas Wesleyan University. His enthusiasm and competence would have added even more to the future of the conference if not for his sudden death the following year. His one effort, held at the Kansas Museum of History, produced a three-day conference that included fifty-four general sessions! The Thursday night address, delivered by Glenda Riley of Ball State University, was on "Re-Imagining the West: The Case of Annie Oakley." Thomas Cogswell of the University of Kentucky edified us with "Political Insult in Seventeenth-Century England" in his Friday luncheon remarks, followed by the University of Texas Robert Divine's "The Persian Gulf War Revisited"

that evening. One cannot underestimate the contribution that Bill Cecil-Fronsman made by that extraordinary effort in 1996.

For the next six years the conference followed the rotation with Oklahoma State University hosting (no coordinator listed in the program) in 1997, the University of Arkansas (Donald Engels) in 1998, and Southwest Missouri State University (Thomas S. Dicke) in 1999 in which Douglas Brinkley, the director of the Eisenhower Center for American Studies, addressed the Friday evening audience on “The Unfinished Presidency: Jimmy Carter’s Journey Beyond the White House.” It was back to the University of Kansas for the twenty-second MACH (Ted Wilson) in 2000, followed by Oklahoma State University (no coordinator listed) in 2001, the University of Arkansas (Tricia Starks) in 2002, and the University of Memphis in 2003, a one-time participant. The latter’s three-day program of twenty general sessions listed no conference coordinator. The two key-note addresses included Jane Landers of Vanderbilt on Friday evening, who spoke on “The Circulation of Abolition Ideology Among ‘Atlantic Creoles in Nineteenth-Century Cuba,” and Patricia Sullivan of the University of South Carolina who asked “‘What’s Integration?’ The Complex Legacy of *Brown v. Board of Education*” on Friday evening.

I coordinated the three-day twenty-six annual MACH in 2004 held at the Sheraton Hawthorn Park. The program contained forty-two general sessions, several of which I created including: “Writing Nineteenth Century Biography,” chaired by H. Wayne Morgan of the University of Oklahoma, which included three-book biographer, John Belohlavek, of the University of South Florida; “Publishing in Historical Journals: Do’s and Don’ts,” chaired by Virgil W. Dean of *Kansas History*; and “Collaboration: Historians and History Teachers Work Together to Enhance the Study of History,” chaired by Kelly A. Woestman of Pittsburg State University. William C. Davis of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University delivered the Thursday evening address, “The Last Days of the Confederate Government,” and Steven Lawson of Rutgers University spoke on Friday evening about “Lyndon R. Johnson: The Last Liberal President.”

The aforementioned 2004 conference at Missouri State University (MSU), following a name change from SMU, involved twenty-seven book exhibitors. Registration fees had slowly risen from \$2 at the first conference to \$40 for faculty and \$20 for independent scholars in 2004. This still represents a much lower fee from national meetings. Moreover, students and the general public were still admitted without charge. Hard data for attendance, by sessions, exists for this conference. It ranged from six to forty-five. The average per session was twenty five. The most attended general

session was on "Anti-communism and Congress in the Post World War II Era." The Thursday evening address drew 180, and the Friday evening one had 111 in attendance.

The twenty-seventh MACH returned to the University of Kansas in 2005 as a three-day affair with thirty-four general sessions and Jeffrey Moran as coordinator. "The Desegregation in Little Rock, Then and Now" was one of many interesting sessions. It featured Justice Robert L. Brown of the Arkansas Supreme Court who talked about "The Second Crisis of Little Rock," while Judith Kilpatrick of the Arkansas University School of Law focused on "Wiley Austin Branton and Little Rock School Integration: *Cooper v. Aaron*," and Independent Scholar Elizabeth Jacoway covered "Richard C. Butler and the Little Rock School Board: The Quest to Maintain Educational 'Quality.'" Tony Freyer of the University of Alabama Law School chaired and commented. Also of special note was Jack P. Greene of Johns Hopkins University's Friday evening banquet address: "Refashioning the National Pasts: The Implications of the New Colonial History for Understanding the History of the American Nation."

The University of Arkansas continued the rotation for the twenty-eighth MACH in 2006 with Tricia Starks again the organizer. The three-day program included twenty-seven general sessions. Tyler Anbinder of George Washington University delivered the luncheon address, "Which Poor Man's Fight?: A New Look at the Union Draft during the American Civil War," followed by the Friday evening presentation by Amilcar Shabazz of Oklahoma State University, "The History, Structure, and Influence of the Black Struggle for Reparations."

In 2007 the MACH returned to Oklahoma State University with James L. Huston in charge. The three-day conference contained forty-nine general sessions in what represented one of the best efforts of the MACH thus far. The quality of the sessions and the participants were noteworthy in every way. The three plenary sessions included Ann Waltner of the University of Minnesota on "Letters from an Immortal: Gender, Religion, and Society in Sixteenth-Century China," followed by the Friday luncheon address featuring Theda Perdue, of the University of North Carolina, who focused on "Indians in the Segregated South," and the Friday evening banquet address, which was opened to the public. Its topic was "The Birth of the European Rights Movement" by Jay Winter, Yale University. Thirteen publishers participated in the book exhibit.

Missouri State University hosted the thirtieth MACH at the DoubleTree Hotel in 2008 with Bob Miller as coordinator for the third time in a three-day program with forty-seven general ses-

sions and a book exhibit of twenty-two publishers. As it has always done in the past, MSU provided free shuttle bus service to students to attend the conference. Not only has this increased the number of attendees, it also has exposed history students to what we do at professional meetings, as well as adding to their understanding of subjects related to their class studies.

The Thursday evening address, sponsored by Drury University of Springfield, featured Holocaust scholar Richard D. Breitman of American University, whose talk was entitled “Advocate for the Doomed: James G. McDonald, Nazi Germany, and American Refugee Policy.” John E. Bodnar of Indiana University stayed in the same time period with “The American Remembrance of World War II” at the Friday luncheon, while Charles P. Roland of the University of Kentucky commented on “Billy Yank, Johnny Reb, and GI Joe” that evening. MSU Civil War scholar William Piston, as he has frequently done, ended the conference by providing a free guided tour of Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield Park on Saturday afternoon. Bill is especially equipped to do so as one who wrote the history of the Battle of Wilson’s Creek.⁵

For the first time the University of Oklahoma hosted the thirty-first MACH in 2009 at the Embassy Suites Hotel and Convention Center on the outskirts of Norman under the direction of Robert Griswold. The outstanding conference facility included a record fifty-six general sessions plus eleven book exhibitors. Resident Historian of the History Channel Steve Gillon delivered the Friday luncheon address on “Lyndon Johnson’s First Twenty-four Hours as President,” and James Kloppenberg of Harvard University gave the Friday evening banquet talk on “Barack Obama and the American Political Tradition.”

Also, for the first time, the University of Arkansas at Little Rock sponsored the thirty-second three-day MACH under the direction of C. Fred Williams with thirty-one general sessions and with only Truman State University Press and the University of Arkansas exhibiting books. David Cook of Rice University provided the Thursday noon lecture on “The Eschaton in Muslim Dreams as recorded in historical literature,” Poshek Fu of the University of Illinois, the Friday noon luncheon one on “Screening the Opium War: The Politics of Chinese Cinema under Japanese Occupation,” and Vernon Burton, professor of Southern History and Culture at Coastal Carolina University, informing us Friday evening with “The Age of Lincoln: Then and Now.”

⁵ William Garrett Piston and Richard W. Hatcher, *The Second Battle of the Civil War and the Men Who Fought It*. The University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

In 2011 the thirty-third MACH returned to more familiar territory at Oklahoma State University with Mike Logan handling the program. The three-day program included thirty-one general sessions highlighted by Vincent Cornell of Emory University's Thursday evening speech, "Jefferson and Jasmine: Islam and Democracy after the Arab Spring," followed by the Friday evening banquet presentation by Heather Cox Richardson of Boston College, whose timely topic focused on "Republicans Then and Now: The Republican Party from its Origins to the Present."

The thirty-fourth MACH in 2012 was sponsored by MSU in conjunction with Drury University. I agreed to serve as associate conference coordinator with Bob Miller acting as coordinator. He and I have had a special relationship since 1991, as we worked closely together in shaping the programs whenever the conference was held in Springfield.

The program contained forty-three general sessions and twenty book exhibitors. The session that I took special pride in crafting was a plenary one held on Friday afternoon on "What We Now Know About the Kennedy Assassination." Chaired by Douglas Brinkley of Rice University, the four panelists were leading authorities on the assassination. They included Gerald McKnight of Hood College who published *Breach of Trust: How the Warren Commission Failed the Nation and Why*; David Kaiser of the Naval War College, the author of *The Road to Dallas: The Assassination of John F. Kennedy*; David Wrone of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, who wrote *The Zapruder Film: Re-framing JFK's Assassination*; and Max Holland, Independent Scholar and the leading producer of the National Geographical Channel Documentary of "JFK: The Lost Bullet." Holland was also the editor of the *Kennedy Assassination Tapes*. This session would not have been possible without the funding of the Strong, Garner, and Bauer law firm and the Department of History and Political Science, Missouri University of Science and Technology. The session was not only attended by some 150 conferees and the general public, but it was also shown by C-Span and is presently available on YouTube.

The other featured speakers were Rami Khouri, a fellow at the Kennedy and the Dubai School of Government, whose remarks were on "History in the Making: Understanding the Arab Uprisings in Their Proper National and Political Contexts," sponsored by Drury University, on Thursday evening. Douglas Brinkley provided the Friday luncheon address on "Walter Cronkite: An Eyewitness to American History," followed by the evening address by George Rable of the University of Alabama on "God as General: Was There a Religious History of the American Civil War?"

I announced at the Friday luncheon of the 2012 conference that I would no longer be involved in the overall supervision of the conference after having attended every Mid-America Conference from its inception, as well as participating in a number of sessions in and outside of Springfield. My reasons for stepping down had less to do with my retirement from the university in December 2006 than with other considerations. Too many former participants, whom I had befriended at the Advanced Placement Readings (AP) and at other conferences such as the Organization of American Historians, had retired or had their travel budgets reduced so they no longer could participate. As one former conference coordinator from Oklahoma State University wrote, when travel budgets are cut, “people had to make choices. . . . They chose more of the conferences devoted to their field or the national conferences. The regional ones like the Mid-America lost out. This was particularly the case with the younger faculty.”⁶

A monumental loss was the participation of the initial four universities in the rotation that no longer were willing or able to host or attend. So much a part of a successful conference was the longstanding fellowship that had developed with history faculty from those schools and from other related institutions. Adding to the problem was the retirement or aging of so many of my generation who had served as coordinators in the MACH. As one of them suggested, “we wanted some chores less time-consuming.”

I also wondered whether the culture had changed. The current generation of faculty at institutions that had played such a vital part seem now more narrowly focused on personal professional goals. As one conference coordinator at the University of Kansas indicated, “Our rising expectations for tenure might have played a role in younger faculty thinking that operating the conference would take too much of their time, while they poured more of their energy into discipline-specific national and international conferences.” It did not help, according to one former conference coordinator from the University of Arkansas, that there was greater reliance on student-based sessions containing papers that too often lacked proper vetting from faculty mentors from home institutions, a problem that intensified during the last two conferences covered in this essay.⁷ This comment was echoed by other observers. This had turned more mature scholars away from the MACH.

⁶ The talk became the prelude to a book that was published in 1984: James N. Giglio and Greg Thielen, *Truman In Cartoon and Caricature*, Iowa State University Press, 1984.

⁷ By email, telephone, or in person, I interviewed seven past coordinators for insights why the four-university cooperation ended. They are from: Evan Bukey and fTricia Starks (University of Arkansas), Jim Huston (Oklahoma

Despite the aforementioned challenges, Bob Miller did his best to preserve the conference. In 2013 the University of Oklahoma sponsored the thirty-fifth MACH with Janet Ward of the history department in charge. It was a multi-disciplinary affair that focused on Transnationalism and Minority Cultures as its theme. There were twenty-two general sessions, along with two keynote speakers in the three-day affair. Jonathan Holloway of Calhoun College and Yale University delivered the Thursday evening address, "Memory in the Diaspora: Black Identity in a Transnational Moment," followed by Shari Huhndorf of the University of California at Berkeley the next evening, whose remarks were on "Visions of Home: Gender and the Politics of Indigenous Transnationalism." The preponderance of presenters came from Oklahoma universities with many from the sponsoring institution. The conference program listed no book exhibit.

The University of Arkansas at Fort Smith hosted the thirty-sixth MACH at the Holiday Inn City Center in 2014. The twenty-one general sessions opened at 8:50 a.m. on Friday morning and ended on Saturday noon. More than half of the discussants came from the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith. H.W. Brands of the University of Texas provided the Friday evening address, "What Would Machiavelli Do? Advice to a President." The program listed no conference coordinator and contained only two presses that displayed books.

In 2015 Shelly Lemons coordinated the thirty-seventh MACH at McKendree University, located in Lebanon, Illinois. The two-day conference, containing fifteen general sessions, began on Friday morning and concluded the next morning. William Maxwell of Washington University at St. Louis provided the Friday evening keynote address, topic unlisted in the program. No book exhibit was listed in the program.

As of this writing, despite its longtime existence, the future of the Mid-America Conference on History is in doubt.

State University), Jeffrey Moran and Ted Wilson (University of Kansas, and Wayne Bartee and Worth Robert Miller of Missouri State University; the latter two also reviewed the entire manuscript along with Dominic Capeci of Missouri State University.