

What are the duties of an aerospace historian?

The primary duties of the aerospace historian include capturing, preserving and interpreting the record of wartime and contingencies operations.

During the Gulf War, for example, Air Force historians deployed to the theater of operations, recorded events, collected combat data, interviewed pilots returning from combat missions and prepared special studies on various operations.

Stateside historians contributed to the war effort by manning the Headquarters Air Force battlestaff and providing historical perspective to assist operational planners and Air Force decision-makers.

Upon conclusion of the war, the data amassed by the deployed historians directly contributed to the successful writing of the Gulf War Air Power Survey, conducted by the Air Force History Support Office, as well as many of the published books on Desert Storm.

Today, historians have deployed in support of operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom, and Odyssey Dawn, ensuring the efforts of the Air Force and its people are captured, recorded and incorporated into the service's legacy.

Although wartime functions are of primary concern, historians also provide support during peacetime. These duties can range from documenting and analyzing humanitarian relief support such as Haiti earthquake assistance during Operation Unified Response, to detailing the many complex facets of a wing's initiatives that maintain and/or enhance its ability to perform its wartime mission.

The historian collects data to preserve an official record of a unit's operations and accomplishments. Additionally, the historian must research and analyze the data to determine its historical significance.

The selected details, placed into a readable format such as a narrative, are published as annual histories or heritage pamphlets. The annual histories provide assistance up and down the rank structure of the Air Force.

Historians can help the Airmen at Airman Leadership School conducting research for a paper, to the project officer writing the outstanding unit award package, to the chief who needs deployment information spanning a five-year time frame.

The history reports also provide data to commanders and staff for decision making scenarios ranging from future operations to environmental surveys to manning authorizations studies.

In a less formal format, the heritage pamphlet fosters esprit de corps by educating personnel on a unit's lineage, honors, and heraldry. Other outreach efforts include: briefing newly assigned personnel on the unit's heritage, providing walking tours through an air park and setting up historical displays that pay tribute to Air Force heroes.

Today's historian performs an integral, multi-faceted role directly supporting the operation and management of the Air Force.

Without data interpretation regarding historical aspects of current issues, the Air Force's ability to benefit from past experience and lessons learned would greatly suffer.

Lacking disciplined collection of otherwise perishable information, future generations would lose a permanent record of the Air Force and its contribution to America's defense.

Historians are the guardians and caretakers of the Air Force's legacy.