

Division of Public Programs

Sample of a Successful Application

This document contains the narrative and walkthrough of a previously funded grant application. Every successful application is different, and this application may have been prepared to meet a slightly different set of guidelines. Each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations, as well as the requirements in the current notice of funding opportunity (NOFO). Prospective applicants should consult the current Public Humanities Projects NOFO at <https://www.neh.gov/grants/public/public-humanities-projects> for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Public Programs staff well before a grant deadline.

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Project Title: Emily Dickinson Museum Comprehensive Interpretive Planning

Institution: Trustees of Amherst College

Project Director: Brooke Steinhauser

Grant Program: Public Humanities Projects: Historic Places Planning

Emily Dickinson Museum Comprehensive Interpretive Planning

A) Nature of request:

The Emily Dickinson Museum (EDM) seeks funding through the National Endowment for the Humanities public humanities projects grant program for historic places at the planning level. Having completed several major master plan goals in its fifteen-year history, the EDM is now focused on uniting its historic spaces, collections, and narratives to better serve its growing contemporary audience. A new comprehensive interpretive plan will accomplish this by incorporating current scholarship and employing new and inclusive methodologies to enhance interpretation. The planning process will holistically revisit the Museum's interpretation goals, themes, and methods in order to create inspiring visitor experiences.

The EDM is uniquely positioned to provide a stimulating visitor experience through an exploration of the person, poetry, and place of Emily Dickinson, who today holds a place in the literary canon alongside Whitman, Shakespeare, and Dante. The EDM holds the largest and most varied collection of non-manuscript objects associated historically with the poet and her family on view in the Homestead and The Evergreens—the two houses comprising the EDM. The prominence of the Dickinson family in nineteenth-century Amherst lends the dwellings and collection unusual significance in the cultural heritage of the community and nation.

With fifteen years of growth since its founding, and with a new mission to “spark the imagination by amplifying Emily Dickinson’s revolutionary poetic voice from the place she called home,” the Museum is primed to reconsider its relevance. The EDM has not had a comprehensive interpretive plan since the houses merged and initial interpretive themes were established in 2003. At this juncture, ongoing evaluation of current interpretation, completed infrastructure work, past restoration campaigns, and impending restoration work and increased collections use all highlight the stark need for an interpretive plan.

Moving forward, the EDM seeks to enhance the visitor experience by developing an actionable interpretive plan. This grant will fund a process resulting in a written plan that considers multiple approaches and methods; utilizes a fully activated collection and fully restored houses; incorporates our organization’s strategic goals; highlights the social impact of our cultural programming; brings urgency to the Museum’s interpretation; and takes an inclusive approach to audience engagement.

This request is for \$63,025.00 to fund the following activities:

- Hire a consultant to provide professional services for the development of a comprehensive interpretive plan in conjunction with the Project Team.
- Convene meetings and focus groups with foremost Dickinson scholars and EDM constituents who will advise and inform the interpretive planning process.
- Pilot new themes and formats and engage in formative evaluation
- Prepare a final comprehensive interpretive plan containing themes, formats, and topical components for historic rooms. The plan will be built on interpretive connections to twenty-first century audiences and inclusive methodologies. It will include recommendations for implementation, staff training, and continuing evaluation of interpretive programs.

B) Humanities content:

Significance of person, poetry, and place: Emily Dickinson’s poetry is today considered among the finest in the English language. Her intriguing biography, the fact that her work was largely unpublished during her lifetime, and the complexity of her poems have fostered personal and intellectual fascinations among readers far more pronounced than that of any other American poet.

Dickinson wrote “I see – New Englandly”. Although Dickinson (1830-1886) was a lifelong New Englander, rarely leaving her hometown of Amherst, Massachusetts, her poems traverse universal topics

such as pain, loss, and immortality and constitute journeys of the mind and spirit. Those poems, published posthumously, have been translated into more than thirty languages and captivate contemporary readers.

Although Dickinson's poetry looms large in the literary canon, myths and misperceptions surround her life and work, making her one of the most challenging and fascinating figures of American poetry. Even as her poetry speaks articulately to the twenty-first century reader, it remains inseparable from the cultural, social, historical, and literary environments in which it was written. How did this reclusive woman living in rural western Massachusetts come to write such original and timeless work—and never publish it? What can her poetry and her life teach us about nineteenth-century New England and its role in shaping America's social, intellectual, and cultural identity? What are the enduring qualities of Dickinson's poetry and person that continue to captivate a contemporary global readership? No place is better suited to an exploration of these questions than Dickinson's hometown of Amherst. Time spent in Dickinson's environment profoundly affects our understanding of her world and her work. With a new interpretive plan, the EDM will be uniquely positioned to provide a stimulating visitor experience that examines these many questions and enables an exploration, literally and contextually, of the person, poetry, and place of Emily Dickinson.

Humanities themes: Prior to the EDM's establishment in 2003, staff and advisors at the Dickinson Homestead and The Evergreens obtained NEH funding to develop separate but compatible interpretive plans for each site, which reflected the state of current scholarship at the time. Through the 1970s and 1980s, feminist scholars examined Dickinson's independence as a poet in the context of constraints on women's opportunities in the nineteenth century. Others focused on historical context, manuscript study, and the poet's reception and influence. The most significant development in Dickinson studies occurred in 1998 with publication of R.W. Franklin's *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, the first complete edition to appear since the 1955 Johnson edition. At almost the same time, *An Emily Dickinson Encyclopedia* (1997), edited by Jane Donahue Eberwein, offered a categorical summary of Dickinson's biography and poetry, while *The Emily Dickinson Handbook* (1998), edited by Roland Hagenbuchle, Cristanne Miller, and Gudrun Grabher, provided comprehensive reviews of the previous hundred years of scholarship in various aspects of Dickinson's life and art. In 1999 and 2000, these strands of scholarship were worked in to twelve interpretive themes for the two houses.

In 2003, when the EDM was founded in a merger of the houses, three unifying interpretive themes were culled from these plans. Since that time, scholarship has continued to forge new meaning from Dickinson's poetry and biography, just as contemporary culture continues to find new relevance in her story. With the assistance of humanities scholars and constituents, the EDM will now make appropriate refinements or expansions on the themes using new scholarship to inform our understandings and examine the possibility of adding new major strands of interpretation. For example, at the time of the 1999/2000 interpretive plans, scholars had not yet established Dickinson's keen recognition in poetry of the national trauma of the Civil War. Nor had there been much considered study of race and ethnicity, and how those issues were specifically framed for Dickinson by domestic servants at her own home. This section of the narrative examines each of the three current themes, describing their significance to the humanities, potential sub-themes to consider in interpretive planning, and foci in current scholarship.

Theme one: Emily Dickinson was a poet of extraordinary ability and output.

Placing herself apart from her contemporaries' poetic styles while exploring similar themes (love, nature, death, and immortality), Dickinson developed a unique poetic voice characterized by startling diction, economy of language, sharp wit, and vivid depictions of struggle and ecstasy. This voice carried into her extensive and diverse correspondence. Not published in her lifetime, her poems brought

posthumous renown to their author when they were published by family and associates. Today Dickinson holds a place in the literary canon alongside Whitman, Shakespeare, and Dante.

Although her calling as a poet began in her teenaged years, Dickinson came into her own as an artist in her late twenties during a short but intense period of creativity that resulted in her composing, revising, and saving hundreds of poems. That period, which scholars identify as 1858–1865, overlaps with the most significant event of American nineteenth-century history, the Civil War. During this time, Dickinson’s personal life also underwent tremendous change as she began an increasing withdrawal from social situations. Dickinson scholars disagree on whether Dickinson’s was a deliberate choice as an artist to isolate herself and focus on her writing, or whether such unusual behavior--startled flight from the doorbell, an increasing inability to see or visit friends, and speaking with select visitors from behind a door--had a medical origin, such as an anxiety condition. Whatever the cause of these personal habits, the poet’s family accommodated her need to write. By the time Dickinson turned 35, she had composed more than 1,100 concise, powerful lyrics that astutely examine pain, grief, joy, love, nature, and art. She recorded about 800 of these poems in small handmade booklets (now called “fascicles”), very private “publications” that she shared with no one. The full extent of her composition was discovered and published only after her death.

Dickinson never married, but because her canon includes evocative love poems, questions concerning her love-life have intrigued readers since her first publication in the 1890s. Scholars have proposed several figures—male and female—in Dickinson’s life as the subjects of potential romantic interest, though no single theory has definite contextual proof. Whatever the reality of Dickinson’s personal experiences, her poetry explores the complexities and passions of human relationships with language as evocative and compelling as her writings on spirituality, death, and nature.

Potential sub-themes for exploration in this planning project:

- Qualities contributing to Dickinson’s unique, revolutionary poetic voice
- Change over time in editing/consuming Dickinson’s poetry
- Dickinson’s impressive literary network, despite being unpublished
- Nineteenth-century discourses on fame, gender, and sexuality
- Artistic independence for women in the nineteenth century

Recent contributing scholarship: The following works illustrate a shift in contemporary scholarship towards explorations of Dickinson’s authorial agency. These scholars are especially interested in the textual evidence and material culture of Dickinson’s manuscripts and composition process and the relationships the poet cultivated with contemporary literary influencers.

Emily Dickinson’s Poems: As She Preserved Them. Ed. Crisanne Miller. Cambridge: Belknap Press-Harvard University Press, 2016.

Miller’s work is the most recent complete edition of Dickinson’s poems. Her editorial stance attempts to get closer to Dickinson as a composer of poems and her hopes for the future of those poems. This is the only reading edition, following comprehensive editions by R.W. Franklin and Thomas Johnson, of Dickinson’s complete poems to distinguish the approximately 1,100 poems she copied onto folded sheets in fair hand, from the poems she kept in rougher form or did not retain. It is the first reading edition to include the alternate words and phrases Dickinson wrote on copies of the poems she retained. Readers can see and determine for themselves the extent to which a poem is resolved or fluid. Miller writes, “given the directions of current scholarship, I felt it would be useful and interesting to have a volume in which you could see Dickinson at work,

on individual manuscripts and throughout her lifetime – how did she keep her poems? order them? how can we understand her poems in relation to periods of time in her life?”

Emily Dickinson: The Gorgeous Nothings. Eds. Marta Werner and Jen Bervin. New York: Christine Burgin/New Directions, in association with Granary Books, 2013.

Made possible by the extensive research of Marta Werner, this first full color facsimile edition of Dickinson’s fragmentary manuscripts presents the important, experimental body of late work exactly as Dickinson wrote it on scraps of envelopes. All known envelope writings by the poet are reproduced life-size, in full color, both front and back, with an accompanying transcription to aid in the reading. At the heart of Werner’s editing stance is the argument that for Dickinson’s poetry spatial arrangement and gestural punctuation are central to meaning.

Kelly, Mike, et al. *The Networked Recluse: The Connected World of Emily Dickinson*. Amherst: Amherst College Press, 2017.

Exploring a selection from Dickinson’s vast literary remains, this volume—an accompaniment to the 2017 exhibition on Dickinson mounted at The Morgan Library & Museum in New York—demonstrates the complex ways in which these objects (her manuscripts, herbarium, etc.) came into conversation with other people, places, and events in the poet’s life. Seeing the network of connections and influences that shaped Dickinson’s life presents a different understanding of this enigmatic poet, and allows us more fully to appreciate both her uniqueness and her humanity.

Loeffelholz, Mary. *The Value of Emily Dickinson*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Loeffelholz explores Dickinson’s value as a writer today, while making accessible important contextual issues essential for understanding this poet. Each chapter presents Dickinson’s relationship to aspects of her nineteenth-century American culture and how these shape her representations of love, gender, sexuality, nationality, war, faith, and doubt. Loeffelholz engages with the poems and their manuscript forms to make connections between Dickinson’s literary myth-making and self-fashioning and her concern about the life and afterlife of her writing. Also particularly valuable to the EDM’s project is her analysis of recent controversies in Dickinson scholarship, including ongoing debates about how and if her manuscript poems can be translated into print.

Pollak, Vivian R. *Our Emily Dickinsons: American Women Poets and the Intimacies of Difference*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017.

Pollak examines poems, letters, journals, and other documents connecting Dickinson to contemporary poets including Marianne Moore, Sylvia Plath, Ted Hughes, and Elizabeth Bishop. She contends that these poets created “fractured self-portraits” of Dickinson that “affirmed particular versions of themselves.” She illustrates two factors that fostered the poets’ impulses to create Dickinson in their own images: first, the ambiguity that is inherent to Dickinson’s artistry, and second, the slow and incremental release of Dickinson’s poetry and letters. Reviewer Jennifer Leader wrote, “one gets the sense that Pollak is inviting us to a timely new stance towards scholarship in which we are more willing to think out loud about our own partialities and personal inclinations towards our subject, both out of humility and as a way to foreground the role our relationship to a poem always affects our interpretations.” This work, a descendant of Susan Howe’s 1985 creative study *My Emily Dickinson*, has

particular relevance to the Museum's goals of enabling visitors to see themselves reflected in Dickinson's life and legacy.

Theme two: Emily Dickinson's internal musings, manifested through her poetry and letters, were most significantly affected by personal relationships, a superior education, and an intense intellectual curiosity about religion and the natural world.

Even as nineteenth-century social and economic trends began to disperse families geographically, the closeness and interdependence of the Dickinson family was a significant factor and protective layer in the poet's sense of artistic independence. Emily Dickinson maintained and cherished a special personal relationship with each of her immediate family members, as a daughter, sister, sister-in-law, and aunt. The proximity of the two family houses made possible these meaningful, individual relationships. Her relationships outside this immediate family circle, with school friends, extended family, and other correspondents, also nurtured her interests.

The family's prominence and geographic location offered the Dickinson women, including Emily, her sister Lavinia, and sister-in-law Susan Gilbert, an education not available universally to women in the United States at this time. The poet's religious upbringing and exposure in her teens to a series of religious revivals prompted a life-long artistic and intellectual exploration of faith, immortality, and God. At the same time, the poet's observations of the natural world on her family's fourteen acres and throughout the New England countryside provided a lens through which to better understand her place in the world. The poet's interest in the natural world was shared with her parents and siblings and reflects Americans' growing interest in integrating the natural world into the domestic environment.

Dickinson's era was defined by the struggle to reconcile traditional Christian beliefs with newly emerging scientific concepts, the most influential being Darwinism. Brought up in a Calvinist household, the young Dickinson attended religious services with her family at the village meetinghouse. Dickinson commented on sermons in her letters and the influence of church music on her poems is apparent in her use of the common meter on which many hymns are based. Her familiarity with the Bible and her facile references to it in letters and poems have long impressed scholars. In Dickinson's teenaged years, a wave of religious revivals moved through New England, inspiring friends and family members to make public professions of their belief in Christ. Although she agonized over her relationship to God, Dickinson ultimately did not join the church. By the time the First Congregational Church moved to a site near the Homestead on Main Street in 1868, Dickinson had stopped attending services altogether. While her poems are saturated with the language, ritual, and expectation of traditional religious experience, her tone varies tremendously. Some poems affirm the need for faith: "Faith - is the Pierless Bridge / Supporting what We see / Unto the Scene that We do not - " (Fr978). Irreverence underlies others: "The Bible is an antique Volume - / Written by faded Men / At the suggestion of Holy Spectres -" (Fr1577). At times Dickinson's poetry expresses outright anger with an absent God: "Of Course - I prayed - / And did God care?" (Fr581). Despite her lack of participation in public religious life, Dickinson's poems reveal a keen and lifelong interest in issues of faith and doubt, suffering and salvation, mortality and immortality.

Potential sub-themes for exploration in this planning project:

- Women's education in nineteenth-century New England
- Calvinism, the Second Great Awakening, and the religious environment of nineteenth-century New England
- The expanding role of science and studies of the natural world in the nineteenth century

Recent contributing scholarship: The following sources illustrate current scholarship that simultaneously places the poet in her context while unpacking moments when Dickinson's choices created tensions within that context.

Ackmann, Martha. *Vesuvius at Home: Ten Days in the Life, Loves, and Mystery of Emily Dickinson*. Harper Collins/Smithsonian, forthcoming 2019.

Ackmann's forthcoming biography examines ten dramatic days that changed the poet's life. From her precocious youth to her wildly creative adulthood to her final days with nearly 2,000 poems behind her, *Vesuvius at Home* reveals Dickinson at her most intimate and authentic. Ackmann has selected ten days to illustrate with detailed research, including February 6, 1848 when Dickinson was a student at Mount Holyoke Female Seminary and went head-to-head over the question of faith with the school's formidable founder, Mary Lyon. Ackmann's work demonstrates how those twenty-four hours shaped her thinking for the rest of her life and informed her poetry.

Bergland, Renée L. "Urania's Inversion: Emily Dickinson, Herman Melville, and the Strange History of Women Scientists in Nineteenth-Century America." *Signs*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2008, pp. 75–99.

In this essay Bergland examines the history of women and American science from 1830-1890. She examines a paradigm shift to late nineteenth-century scientific antifeminism from an earlier, pre-Civil War period of possibility for women in science. Bergland traces Dickinson's studies at Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, called by its founder a "castle of science", and awareness of scientific discovery in her own region to illustrate her long-standing fascination with science and the natural world. She further argues that Dickinson's education and interest in this area permitted the poet a gender-fluid, queer identity, illustrated, for example, in poems where she refers to her "boyhood".

Eberwein, Jane Donahue, Stephanie Farrar, and Cristanne Miller, eds. *Dickinson in Her Own Time: A Biographical Chronicle of Her Life, Drawn from Recollections, Interviews, and Memoirs by Family, Friends, and Associates*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2015.

The editors have compiled an assortment of new and difficult-to-locate materials presenting a documentary portrait of the poet that complicates standard biographies and ideas in the popular imagination. The work locates Dickinson historically through extant recollections, interviews, memoirs, and reviews of her contemporaries that comment on the poet or her writings. Miller's work is focused on Dickinson's cultivation of a writer's reputation within her circle, while Farrar is particularly interested in historical evidence of Dickinson's relationship to race.

Gilpin, Clark W. *Religion Around Emily Dickinson*. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 2014.

Gilpin proposes that understanding the religious aspect of the surrounding culture enhances our appreciation of Emily Dickinson's poetry, and that her poetry casts light on features of religion in nineteenth-century America that might otherwise escape our attention. Religion, especially Protestant Christianity, was "around" Emily Dickinson in explicitly religious practices, literature, architecture, and ideas but also as an embedded influence on normative patterns of social organization in the era, including gender roles, education, and ideals of personal intimacy and fulfillment. Through her poetry, Dickinson imaginatively reshaped this religious inheritance to create her own personal perspective on what it might mean to be religious in the nineteenth century. Gilpin illustrates how Dickinson's creative engagement with religion has stimulated and challenged successive generations of readers in the United States and around the world.

Theme 3: The Dickinson family was a prominent family, its fortunes intimately connected with that of the community and the larger social, political, and economic climate. The family's social and

intellectual ambitions affected and informed their lives in significant ways.

Edward Dickinson and his son Austin Dickinson typified ambitious and relatively prosperous male residents of a small town through their profession as lawyers and through their involvements with cultural, civic, and political pursuits. Their houses, and the changes they and their families made to them, also provide evidence of these ambitions and standing. Edward Dickinson embraced the conservative Whig political party and embodied its ethics of responsibility, fairness, and personal restraint to a point that contemporaries found his demeanor severe and unyielding. Edward represented Amherst in the state legislature several times, and he was elected to the Thirty-third Congress from his region, held from 1853-1855. Between Austin and Edward, a Dickinson served as treasurer of Amherst College for over sixty years.

Daily life at the Homestead and The Evergreens included roles typical for rural New England women of the nineteenth century and demonstrates how women's public and private worlds intersected, through managing households and housekeeping, entertaining, child-rearing, and pursuing cultural and educational enrichment. Emily Dickinson participated in an active and involved family life but by the mid-1860s had withdrawn from the social obligations expected of a woman of her class. Next door at The Evergreens, Susan Dickinson displayed to Amherst society her proficiencies as a housekeeper, hostess, and intellect while privately serving as a trusted audience for Dickinson's work, coping with the death of a child, and dealing with the loss of a spouse's fidelity.

The years of the Civil War corresponded to Emily Dickinson's most intense period of productivity as a poet, during which she is thought to have written roughly half of her total number of poems. She had friends such as Thomas Wentworth Higginson who fought in the war. Her brother, Austin paid for a substitute, the standard way to avoid military service. Both Emily and Austin were friends with Frazar Stearns, son of the Amherst College president. Stearns' death at the Battle of Newbern, North Carolina, is possibly memorialized in Dickinson's poem "Victory comes late" (Fr195). Dickinson followed the war news closely, but never wrote a poem as explicit in its patriotic fervor as, for example, Julia Ward Howe's "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Her poems tend to assume a less heroic posture. Her most direct participation in the war effort may have been the three poems that appeared anonymously, during late February and March of 1864, in a Brooklyn-based newspaper called *Drum Beat*, conceived for the purpose of raising money for medical supplies and care for the Union Army.

Potential sub-themes for exploration in this planning project:

- The Civil War's effect in a rural New England town, Dickinson's Civil War poetry
- Liberal education and the Christian ministry at Amherst College
- Domesticity, gender roles, and domestic service in the nineteenth century
- Nineteenth-century tourism, travel

Recent contributing scholarship: These sources illustrate recent scholarly interest in Dickinson as a Civil War poet, as a creative whose output was supported by the domestic labor of others, and as a consumer engaged with her contemporary culture.

Benfey, Christopher. *A Summer of Hummingbirds: Love, Art, and Scandal in the Intersecting Worlds of Emily Dickinson, Mark Twain, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Martin Johnson Heade*. New York: Penguin Books, 2009.

Benfey's work chronicles the shared experience of artists and writers who lived during and after the Civil War. He illustrates the ways in which these artists felt themselves distinctly different in taste and temperament from the pre-War era in which they came of age. With this came a sense of loss, but also a religious, political, and aesthetic liberation. Following the moments when these individuals' lives

intersected, he examines the subsequent exchange of art and finds a common denominator in their desire for mobility and dynamism in post-War life.

Miller, Cristanne. *Reading in Time: Emily Dickinson in the Nineteenth Century*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012.

Miller argues that, even when circulating relatively few poems, Dickinson was vitally engaged with literary and political culture of her day and, in effect, wrote for her contemporaries. Unlike previous accounts placing Dickinson in her era this work demonstrates the extent to which formal properties of her poems borrow from the short-lined verse she read in schoolbooks, periodicals, and single-authored volumes. Miller presents Dickinson's writing in relation to contemporary experiments with the lyric, the ballad, and free verse, and presents the dramatic lyric as one of her preferred modes for responding to the Civil War.

Murray, Aife. *Maid as Muse: How Servants Changed Emily Dickinson's Life and Language*. Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2009.

Murray presents an intimate story of joined lives between Emily Dickinson and her domestic servants. Part scholarly study, part personal journey, Murray's book uncovers the world of Irish, Native American, and African American maids and laborers, seamstresses and stablemen employed by the Dickinson family. Murray argues that Margaret Maher, in particular, influenced the cultural outlook, fashion, artistic subject, and even poetic style of Emily Dickinson. Irish immigrant Maher becomes the lens to a larger story about artistic reciprocities and culture-making that has meaning beyond Dickinson. This portrait of the artist and her family not only injects themes of class and ethnic difference into the story but also imparts subtle details and intimacies that make the study of Emily Dickinson urgent.

Richards, Eliza. *Emily Dickinson in Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

This volume of thirty-three essays by leading scholars offers a comprehensive introduction to the contexts most important for the study of Dickinson's writings. While providing an overview of their topic, the essays also present groundbreaking research and original arguments, treating the poet's local environments, literary influences, social, cultural, political and intellectual contexts, and reception. The collection is an indispensable contribution to the study not only of Dickinson's writings but also of the contexts for poetic production and circulation more generally in the nineteenth-century United States.

Wald, Jane. "The 'Poet Hunters': Transforming Emily Dickinson's Home into a Literary Destination." *The Emily Dickinson Journal*, vol. 26 no. 2, 2017, pp. 71-98.

The Dickinson family libraries reveal that they were energetic consumers of the novels, poetry, literary biographies, exploration narratives, and other works that induced interest in authors' lives and places associated with them. A conscious participant in contemporary tourism, both in person and through imaginative reading and composition, Dickinson was aware of the risks of well-meaning but intrusive fans. In this article, Wald traces these ideas through the history of Dickinson's publication and the establishment of the first "museum" for Dickinson's work, when Martha Dickinson Bianchi, who cultivated her aunt's celebrity through a decades-long publication campaign, transformed the family homes into tourism destinations. Wald illustrates how the personal motivations of individual promoters of Dickinson's early celebrity – Lavinia Dickinson, Susan Dickinson, Mabel Loomis Todd, and Martha Dickinson Bianchi – had specific consequences for the treatment of the Dickinson family homes as literary sites.

C) Project formats:

Currently, the EDM's largest interpretive program is a guided tour of both houses offered five days a week during the open season, December through March (six days a week in the summer extended season). This one-hour tour is called "My Letter to the World" and begins at the Homestead (Emily Dickinson's house) before going to The Evergreens (home to the poet's brother Austin and his family). Tours, for which a maximum fee of \$15/person is charged, are offered between seven and twelve times throughout the day, depending on the season, and are led by a single guide for groups at a maximum of thirteen people.

EDM guides are paid employees who undergo extensive training prior to interacting with the public. Training includes several focused content sessions on poetry, architecture, material culture, and guiding techniques. Guides shadow other tours and are assigned readings including a biography, selected letters, poems, and articles. All EDM guides write their own tours following a prescribed tour route, a tour outline that suggests topics for each space, and using the EDM's current interpretive themes. Guides are expected to include at least one quotation from the poet per room, so that a hallmark of this tour is experiencing Dickinson's own remarkable words.

The EDM also offers a one-hour audio tour of the three-acre landscape surrounding the two historic buildings. Developed in 2007, the audio tour was funded by a grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Service. "Grounds of memory" may be experienced using an audio wand rental from the Museum or by personal cell phone. At each stop a two- to three-minute narration and a poem (read by Richard Wilbur and Mary Jo Salter) connect a landscape feature to the poet's fascination with the natural world.

The challenges of our current interpretive program are also our best opportunities for improvement. At present, visitors can only experience the Museum by guided tour. The EDM recognizes that while our tours receive consistent positive feedback on exit surveys, this program inadequately serves a range of learning styles; is exclusive of non-English speakers and of visitors with disabilities; and results in a cumbersome staffing model and outdated or inconsistent messaging. It is clear that in addition to updating our themes to reflect current scholarship and popular interest, the EDM must consider expanding its interpretive modalities.

Other important outcomes of interpretive planning will align our interpretation with the progress the Museum has made since its founding.

- The plan will address the continuity of visitor experience between the two houses and the landscape comprising the Museum. With the houses currently in very different states of preservation and containing different ratios of collections objects and interpreted space, current visitors are often led to think of the Homestead as "less authentic" than The Evergreens. The interpretive plan will consider restoration, collections, and the landscape as crucial tools for building continuity and stretching interpretive messages across the whole Museum site.
- The current interpretation is not aligned with the EDM's mission statement, which was updated in 2016. The interpretive plan will focus on visitor experiences that "spark the imagination by amplifying Emily Dickinson's revolutionary poetic voice from the place she called home." This will require increased attention in our interpretation to Dickinson's revolutionary qualities, her poetic process, and a re-positioning of the site as a place of generative creativity.
- When the EDM removes administrative functions from the Homestead in spring 2019 (see Project History for more information), at least two new spaces pertaining to domestic labor and service will become available for interpretation. The interpretive plan is an opportunity to fully realize those stories by considering new spaces and by strengthening those perspectives in existing spaces.
- Increasingly, the EDM is sought out for comment or contribution to popular culture products featuring Dickinson. From the 2016 feature film *A Quiet Passion*, starring Cynthia Nixon, to the forthcoming AppleTV series with Hailee Steinfeld, Dickinson is experiencing an upswing in popular interest. Artists such as Spencer Finch, musicians such as Jane Ira Bloom, and poets such as Tracy K.

Smith present their work as directly inspired by Dickinson. Her inclusion in books of “feminist saints” and “literary witches” and in internet listicles of “best gay writers” even denotes a reclamation of Dickinson by contemporary fans. This kind of interest must be a consideration of the interpretive plan if the EDM is to reflect the poet’s relevance back to existing and potential Dickinson readers.

- In the last fifteen years, the EDM has witnessed in its visitors a great deal of the *personal* impact Dickinson’s story and poetry have on individual lives. Now, in the interpretive planning process, we will utilize this and new research to consider messaging around the wider *social* impact of this story. Literacy, women’s rights, and environmentalism are avenues for this exploration. The revised themes and ideas that emerge in our planning process will result in interpretation that is not only vibrant and relevant, but urgent for our time.

To ensure these outcomes are achieved, the interpretive planning process will rely on participation of these groups:

- A cohort of Scholar Advisors representing current Dickinson scholarship will focus on the poet’s relevance to the humanities. These scholars are very familiar with the EDM and will need little orientation to our project’s goals. Spending a day working on-site in small groups focused on individual themes, the Scholar Advisors will offer critical review of existing themes and will consider the unique stories that can be conveyed at the EDM, and ways the visitor experience can connect to these ideas. A follow-up teleconference and written reviews of draft themes will ensure satisfactory results.
- EDM constituents will contribute to this process through a series of three focus groups comprised of educators, students, Museum volunteers, program partners, poets, artists, and town officials. Constituents will be grouped by shared interest (Students and educators; Creativity and art; Dickinson fans) and asked to respond to working interpretive themes and proposed methods for future interpretation. These groups will offer perspective on Dickinson’s relevance to contemporary lives locally and beyond. Constituents will also be invited to participate in small piloting efforts in early spring 2020. Pilots will focus on new interpretive methods, including self-guided time in the houses, immersive audio, and object- and inquiry-based engagement with staff.
- Current EDM staff and board members will contribute in several ways over the course of the project year: A small group of staff and Board representatives will meet with ObjectIDEA consultants during the first project meeting in September 2019. An all-staff workshop in November 2019 will focus on interpretive goals, visions, and objectives, setting priorities for new interpretation at the museum. Selected Board and staff will be asked to review draft plan components during the process. Selected staff will participate in small piloting initiatives undertaken in early spring 2020. Finally, the Board of Governors will host the final interpretive plan presentation at the annual meeting in June, 2020.
- ObjectIDEA, a consulting group based in Salem, Massachusetts, will provide expertise in facilitation of Scholar Advisors and focus groups; understanding of museum design; and knowledge of evaluation and trends that impact existing or potential audiences. Consultants will ensure that the project team has clear, identifiable goals for each project stage.
- The Project Team will meet at key points of the project for a total of six meetings over the course of the year. The Team will synthesize advisor and focus group feedback and consultant research; refine planning processes including small piloting and evaluation efforts; and review materials produced by ObjectIDEA, including draft plan components and final drafts. Members of the project team will also participate in facilitated workshops with EDM staff and Scholar Advisors during the planning process.

D) Project resources:

Collections: The EDM holds the largest and most varied collection of non-manuscript objects associated historically with the poet, and with and her family at the Homestead and The Evergreens. The prominence of the Dickinson family in the nineteenth century lends the dwellings and collection unusual significance in the cultural heritage of the community and nation. The collection of approximately 7,000 objects represents a range of themes in cultural and social history from the first half of the nineteenth century through the middle of the twentieth century: women's history, domestic life, horticulture, fine arts and decorative arts, architecture, and landscape architecture. The collections include fine art, silver, ceramics, furniture, toys, clothing, decorative textiles, household equipment, and more. The collection not only captures the details of nineteenth-century life in a semi-rural educational and agricultural community, but also illustrates vividly the daily life and writing habits of one of the world's greatest poets. The Museum is currently working to document and provide appropriate environments for its collections at the Homestead and The Evergreens, which will allow more of these materials to be used in the houses.

Historic structures: The Homestead and The Evergreens together with the landscape surrounding them form the foundation of the EDM. These core elements are the largest and most visible pieces in the Museum's collections. When Samuel Fowler Dickinson, the poet's paternal grandfather, built the Homestead in 1813, nearly everything about the building marked it as different from the homes of his neighbors. Dickinson is said to have built the first brick house in town; brick, an expensive material, was only just coming into favor in the Connecticut River Valley. Inside and out, its ornament reflected the newest style in building construction, known as Federal. Emily Dickinson was born, died, and did most of her writing in this house. Dickinson found poetic inspiration in daily acts of domestic life here, whether skimming milk in the pantry, baking bread in the kitchen, or tending exotic plants in the small conservatory her father built for her. The poet's bedroom, located in the southwest second-floor chamber of the Homestead, evokes the most visceral responses from Museum visitors because of its essential function as Dickinson's writing studio.

Next door at The Evergreens, the contrasts in Dickinson family generations are evident in form and function. Constructed for Austin Dickinson and his wife, Sue, the home became an epicenter for nineteenth-century Amherst society and reflects changes in fashion from its construction in 1856 to the 1890s, when the house was last redecorated by the family. Visitors to this home are immediately struck by the original condition of the finishes in this house, in contrast to the un/restored finishes of the Homestead. The Evergreens marked the introduction of *picturesque* architecture to Amherst, and is styled after the Italian villas of the Tuscan countryside—a stark contrast to the Homestead. Inside, a social order is clearly evident at The Evergreens, where the division of public, private, and service space is dictated by location of the rooms. The house reflects the mid-nineteenth-century revolutionizing of convenient domestic technology; at the time of its construction and throughout the following decades, an assortment of features was installed which aided in the comfort and operation of the household.

The Evergreens is essentially the first Emily Dickinson "museum". After the sale of the Homestead in 1916, the poet's niece Martha Dickinson Bianchi then involved in a significant publishing campaign as editor of her aunt's work, brought the family furnishings to The Evergreens. A 1937 book, *Massachusetts: A Guide to its Places and People*, notes that the poet's home is not open to the public, but that "...the Emily Dickinson memorabilia are preserved at *The Evergreens*, the home of the poet's only brother...just across the lawn, which is the home of her niece and biographer, where during the summer months they may be seen by those especially interested in Emily Dickinson's work." The 'Emily Room' at The Evergreens still holds the Dickinson family cradle, and the typewriters Bianchi used in her editorial work.

Landscape: The landscape that surrounds the Homestead and The Evergreens was both subject and object for Emily Dickinson and her family. All of the Dickinsons were active participants in creating and maintaining the garden and landscape and held interests in plants and the natural world. The poet is

especially associated with her use of flowers, plants, gardening, and nature imagery in her poems and as subjects for her letters. Today, the three acres of land surrounding the Homestead and The Evergreens provide contemporary access to her historic creative output.

Reading the landscapes of the two houses comprising the EDM is a unique opportunity to see the change in American landscape design in the second half of the nineteenth century. The Homestead was typical of a mid-nineteenth century working, gentleman's farm, with a large vegetable garden, a barn complex with livestock, and an orchard, in addition to an ornamental flower garden that was the province of the poet's mother Emily Norcross, sister Lavinia Dickinson, and the poet herself. The Evergreens, in contrast, was a landscape designed by Austin Dickinson to frame his stylish *picturesque* house in the manner of designers Andrew Jackson Downing, Frederick Law Olmsted, and Calvert Vaux. Susan Dickinson and her daughter Martha tended flower beds amidst winding paths and an arboretum of ornamental trees and shrubs both native and exotic.

Archives/primary sources: Although not a repository for the poet's manuscripts, the EDM has strong relationships with the institutions that do hold her work, including the Archives and Special Collections at Amherst College's Frost Library, the Houghton Library at Harvard University, the John Hay Library at Brown University, and the Jones Library, the Town of Amherst's public library.

Amherst College's Frost Library Archives and Special Collections preserves almost half of Dickinson's manuscripts, as well as her iconic daguerreotype and a lock of her red hair. In addition, the College actively collects material related to Dickinson and to life at Amherst College during the nineteenth century. The EDM is owned by the Trustees of Amherst College and collaborates regularly with Mike Kelly, head of Archives and Special Collections.

Harvard University's Houghton Library Dickinson Collection preserves more than 1,000 autograph poems and some 300 letters. The collection also includes such treasures as Dickinson's Herbarium; the writing table and chair from her bedroom in Amherst, where she wrote much of her poetry; and a few hundred books from the family library as well as some of the family papers that provide insight into the context of the poet's life and work. The heart of the collection is the forty hand-sewn manuscript books, or fascicles, into which the poet copied her poems. The curator of this collection serves on the board of governors of the EDM.

The documentary record for the Dickinson family is especially rich in the writings of two of its members whose papers are found at the John Hay Library at Brown University. This holding, containing over 2,000 books from The Evergreens, is particularly important for interpretation of that house.

Martha Dickinson Bianchi, daughter of Austin and Susan Dickinson, was the last surviving member of her family's line. Bianchi, an author and poet in her own right, is best known for her work editing her aunt's poetry. After her mother and aunt died, Bianchi inherited the Dickinson manuscripts that remained in her family. In 1914, she published *The Single Hound: Poems of Emily Dickinson*, which revived interest in her aunt's work. She published several more books of Dickinson's poetry and letters as well as her own reminiscences about her aunt. The latter are particularly helpful as documentary sources for the houses and landscapes comprising the EDM.

The writings of Susan Dickinson, sister-in-law to the poet, include poems, reviews, essays, letters, and notes. These primary sources cast light on Dickinson's poetic project, her artistic goals, ambitions, beliefs, and commitments. Susan's reminiscences are rich with information about nineteenth-century life at The Evergreens among the Dickinson's cultured circle. These unpublished writings are also available on the open access Dickinson Electronic Archives 1 [<http://archive.emilydickinson.org/>].

The Jones Library Special Collections Department has an impressive Dickinson-related collection of about 7,000 items, including original manuscript poems and letters, material about the town of Amherst, family correspondence, and newspapers. These sources place the poet within the context of her Amherst community and the wider world, including religion, politics, education, the Civil War.

Contemporary Dickinson scholarship and the Museum's work benefit immensely from several digitization projects, foremost of which is The Emily Dickinson Archive [<http://www.edickinson.org/>], which provides open access to high-resolution images of nearly all of Emily Dickinson's extant poetry manuscripts. A collaborative effort across many institutions, the archive provides readers with images of manuscripts held in multiple libraries and archives and offers an array of transcriptions of Dickinson's poems. It also features digital tools intended to foster exploration and scholarship.

E) Project history:

Up to the present, the EDM has concentrated its resources on making our two historic structures secure and creating environments suitable for collections. Since the development of a Master Plan (partly funded by a Save America's Treasures grant) in 2005–2006, the EDM has systematically resolved deferred maintenance and critical infrastructure issues in both houses. The EDM has raised substantial funds for and completed the installation of perimeter drainage systems, replacement of electrical systems, installation of fire detection and suppression systems in both houses, completion of structural and landscape documentation, repair of structural weaknesses at the Homestead, and restoration of The Evergreens exteriors.

The EDM continues to improve the collections environment. A NEH Preservation and Access grant awarded in 2018 currently funds additional non-mechanical building envelope improvements at The Evergreens and installation of a new HVAC system to control humidity and temperature within appropriate ranges for house museum and collections. This project is among the final systems improvements that will clear the way for authentic restoration of the Dickinson family homes, inside and out.

The Museum's Master Plan considers restoration to be an imperative for overall site stewardship. For this document's purpose, comprehensive restoration includes both houses, the landscape, and the reconstruction of missing buildings and landscape features. The Plan states that "Repair and restoration work will be planned and executed to achieve the highest degree of authenticity possible. Authenticity is the degree to which a property conveys the truthfulness in its interpretation of its period of significance, materials, style, finishes. The accurate restoration of a Museum building to the period of significance must be met with undisputed credibility backed by proper research into archival resources and intense probing into the physical fabric of building. Sufficient research must be undertaken to convey the lives and physical attributes of the landscape and buildings present during the period of significance."

Following the Master Plan, the EDM established a period of significance, which has since framed restoration and interpretive efforts. Although the primary emphasis of the EDM is with the poet, the significance of the site is more complex, involving generations of Dickinsons. The timeframe between 1855, when the Dickinson family moved back to the Homestead and 1913, when Susan Dickinson passed away, represents the most important period in the history of the Dickinson family as it relates to the museum site as a whole. Within this period, further refined timeframes were set for each house. At the Homestead, the period 1855–1886 represents the Dickinsons' return from a different dwelling in Amherst and subsequent improvements to the Homestead; the life of Emily's parents and sister; and the poet's writing years, adult life, and death. At The Evergreens, the period of 1880–1913 represents the adult life of Austin and Susan; their family; the redecoration and remodeling that reflected changing nineteenth-century tastes; and the early period of publishing Dickinson's poetry. Susan Dickinson, Lavinia Dickinson, and Austin Dickinson's lover Mabel Loomis Todd played crucial roles in this last era.

A 2007 furnishings plan, funded by an Institute for Museum and Library Services grant, guides the Museum's use of material evidence in our collection to tell Emily Dickinson's story. A 2007 Landscape Interpretive Plan, funded in part by an IMLS Museums for America grant, set forth restoration plans and interpretive ideas for the three-acre landscape upon which the two EDM buildings sit.

Restoration efforts at the EDM thus far have been undertaken as discreet projects. In 2005 the Homestead exterior paint was restored to the scheme representative of the 1870s. In 2009, the EDM completed restoration of the hemlock hedge and historic fences, gates and gateposts spanning the front of the Dickinson property. In 2015, Emily Dickinson's bedroom, arguably the most important space in interpreting her writing practice, was restored to its nineteenth-century appearance. In 2016, The Evergreens' exterior paint scheme was restored to the 1880s colors. That same year, a representative fruit orchard was planted at the Homestead. In 2017, the Homestead library was restored and the conservatory, which had been removed in 1916, was reconstructed from original pieces that had been saved on site. These restorations have illustrated how authentic period finishes enliven the poet's story for visitors.

In 2018, the EDM Board of Governors raised funds to purchase a neighboring property with the intention of removing all administrative functions from the Homestead. Removing offices will, over time, allow for complete restoration of the Homestead to its appearance during the period of interest. In the near term, guided by the Furnishings Plan, the Museum intends to restore two significant interior Homestead rooms and the hallways, which will expand opportunities for interpreting Emily Dickinson's life and work in the house. The transition to new offices in the neighboring property is expected to occur in the fall of 2019, and restoration work at the Homestead will follow.

The EDM has not had a comprehensive interpretive plan since the houses merged and initial interpretive themes were established in 2003. Now, in 2019, the completed infrastructure work, past restoration campaigns, and impending restoration work and increased collections use all highlight the stark need for an interpretive plan. As the timeframe of our Master Plan has come to a close, the EDM board and staff are working to generate new organizational and strategic priorities, which will be greatly informed by the interpretive planning process.

EDM staff have begun testing and benchmarking efforts to prepare for the planning period. In 2017, EDM made a change in the existing tour program with the goal of bringing more visitors into both houses. This entailed a shift from offering two regular daily tours—one forty-five-minute tour within just the Homestead, the other a ninety-minute tour of both houses—to a single sixty-minute tour that visits both houses. At the same time, staff began piloting Short Daily Programs—short conversations with guides in the Museum's tour center about special topics pertaining to Dickinson, including publication, the Civil War, and music. The goal of the Short Daily Programs was to offer more choice to visitors. The sixty-minute tours are now fully launched at the Museum with no discernable negative impact on visitor experience, and an increase from 40% to 100% of visitors to The Evergreens. Piloting of Daily Programs has been successful in engaging visitors, but will require further logistical considerations when piloting continues in spring 2019.

In spring and summer of 2018, staff made benchmarking visits to sites of interest including the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, Frederick Church's Olana, the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, the Mark Twain House, Washington Irving's Sunnyside, and the Charles Dickens House in London. Visits included taking in the visitor experience as well as conversations with staff members about interpretive efforts. The EDM staff unanimously found the Cole site, where technology is used in clever and unobtrusive ways to enhance the story, to be especially energizing.

F) Audience, marketing, promotion:

The Interpretive Plan will affect all aspects of tours and programming at the Emily Dickinson Museum and reach the entire audience of museum visitors (14,033 in FY18 and projected to increase in FY19). By revising our interpretive themes and creating more engaging visitor experiences, our intent is to reach beyond our current audience.

At the EDM the current tour audience is approximately 59% from the Northeast (25% from Massachusetts); 35% US non-Northeast; and 6% international. Our audience for public programming is

95% from the Northeast, with 75% from the Amherst area. The EDM website traffic is 78.4% United States (with a level regional distribution) and 21.6% international. The Museum's tour audience is 15% under 18 years old; 45% aged 18-54; and 40% aged 55 or older. First-time visitors comprise 84% of our tour audience, while 70% of our public programs audience is repeat visitors. A survey of EDM tour visitors highlights word-of-mouth and general pre-existing awareness as the primary ways of learning about the Museum.

The Museum promotes itself and its activities through several platforms including our current website (a new website will be launched in spring 2019), an electronic newsletter that reaches approximately 5,000 constituents, a social media presence (7,200 Facebook followers; 2,500 followers on Instagram, 4,700 followers on Twitter), paid advertising, cross-promotion within the Museums10 Consortium and the Regional Tourism Council.

In recent years, the EDM has put energy into several strategic partnerships that will help expand audiences:

Amherst College is the EDM's parent organization, and the Museum is working to serve more of its students and faculty. This not only expands the younger demographic for the Museum, but is also perhaps our greatest opportunity to serve a more racially and ethnically diverse audience. The Amherst College student body is comprised of students from 48 states and 54 countries, with 45% of students self-identifying as students of color and 55% receiving financial aid. Three years ago, the Museum began working directly with the Dean of Faculty to identify engagement opportunities including curricular and academic connections, as well as opportunities through student life. At present students from the Five Colleges (Amherst, Smith, Mount Holyoke, Hampshire, and University of Massachusetts-Amherst) comprise only about 8% of the EDM tour audience. The interpretive plan will focus on service to this audience in particular.

The Amherst area is working to develop itself as a tourism destination. In 2011 the Commonwealth of Massachusetts established a Regional Tourism Council for Hampshire County, one of seventeen in the state linked through the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism. In 2016, the state designated a local cultural district in Amherst that is geographically centered on the Emily Dickinson Museum. With this designation, Amherst can access state resources, including statewide and national marketing opportunities, programs for developing cultural economic development strategies, and cultural facilities planning and construction. As more resources are put toward promoting Hampshire County tourism and Amherst as a cultural destination, the Museum's tourist audience will grow.

Other strategic partners, such as Harvard's Houghton Library, the Morgan Library in New York City, the Emily Dickinson International Society, and the Folger Shakespeare Library, will continue to help the Museum expand its reach and its potential audience through collaborative efforts. In 2017 the Morgan Library presented an exhibition on Dickinson's life and work in collaboration with Amherst College and the Emily Dickinson Museum; it was visited by 91,000 people, which broke the Morgan's previous attendance record and remains the most visited exhibition in their history. The Emily Dickinson International Society holds an annual meeting in Amherst, co-sponsored by the Museum, that is typically attended by 150 scholars and participants from around the world. Through this partnership the Museum remains visible and connected to global contemporary scholarship. The Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington DC (with over 400,000 annual visitors) is also owned by Amherst College and is in conversation with the EDM about future collaborative programming.

G) Evaluation of the project's impact:

For the last decade, the EDM has used an exit survey to evaluate its tours. The survey questions are intended to gather contact and demographic information, ascertain visitor behaviors and interests, and collect open-ended tour feedback. This winter, global market research firm HawkPartners is working pro bono with the EDM to survey existing constituents, gathering quantitative data about visitor

engagement and learning. This data will provide rich front-end evaluation for the interpretive planning process.

Simple piloting during the planning process will be accompanied by formative evaluation to provide valuable feedback and refine the plan further. Evaluation processes will be designed by ObjectIDEA and executed by EDM staff and project team. Evaluation methods will primarily be on-site observation and conversation, and the assessment will focus on learning outcomes, social engagement, and spatial logistics. Larger swaths of public feedback in response to plan components will be solicited during some of the Museum's annual public programs including Dickinson's Birthday Celebration Open House in December 2019, which draws over 200 participants, and Free Fun Friday in August 2020, which draws over 400 participants.

The final interpretive plan will include implementation recommendations that stipulate protocols for continued evaluation of new interpretive approaches. Furthermore, the developed plan will be designed to be actionable with clear priorities for prototyping, development, and implementation; therefore, one measure of impact for this grant-funded project will be our organization's use of it. After implementation of this plan, we anticipate that future markers of success will include increased visitation, improved learning outcomes, and a stronger overall EDM brand identity.

H) Organizational profile: (1 page)

The Emily Dickinson Museum was created in 2003 when the Dickinson Homestead and The Evergreens merged under the ownership of Amherst College. The College has since designated the sole use of the Homestead and The Evergreens as a historic site perpetuating the legacy of poet Emily Dickinson. By means of a formal Memorandum of Understanding dated June 30, 2003, the Museum is governed by a quasi-independent Board of Governors and is responsible for its own strategic plans and fundraising for operations, programs, and capital projects. On October 1, 2016, the Board of Governors approved a new mission statement for the Emily Dickinson Museum: "To spark the imagination by amplifying Emily Dickinson's revolutionary poetic voice from the place she called home."

The Dickinson Homestead, built in 1813 by Emily Dickinson's grandfather, was the poet's birthplace, principal residence, and writing studio where she penned nearly 1,800 poems. It is listed on the state and national registers of historic places and is a National Historic Landmark. Strategic plans for this house aim to restore it to the Museum's period of significance, 1855–1886.

The Evergreens, built in 1856 by Emily Dickinson's father on property immediately adjacent to the Homestead, was the home of the poet's brother and his family. It was occupied by Dickinson family heirs until 1988 and has remained virtually unchanged since the early twentieth century. It is also listed on the state and national registers of historic places. In 1991, The Evergreens passed to a private testamentary trust, the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust (named in honor of Emily Dickinson's niece), which began developing The Evergreens as a museum. The merger in 2003 of the houses and their shared three-acre landscape restored the property to a configuration that Emily Dickinson herself had known and furthers the College's long-standing associations with the Dickinson family and its stewardship of the poet's manuscripts in its Archives and Special Collections and her material legacy at the Museum.

Open to the public from March through December, the Emily Dickinson Museum offers guided tours, public programs, and educational opportunities for students of all ages and the wider public. The Museum's primary interpretive program is a guided tour of the Dickinson houses and property. The Museum maintains an active and varied schedule of forty public programs each year, which often feature contemporary poets and artists for example the annual Amherst Poetry Festival, produced by the EDM and drawing over 1,000 participants. An audience of 14,500 visitors per year includes Emily Dickinson fans from all over the world, poetry and history enthusiasts, visitors to and classes from the

five area colleges (Amherst, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke, Smith, and UMass-Amherst), K–12 school groups, and bus tours.

The Museum employs a full-time staff of five and part-time staff of approximately thirty-five, depending upon the season. The Museum's operating budget of \$825,000 is funded by gifts and grants (47%), earned income (31%), annual Amherst College contribution (13%), and investment income (9%).

I) Project team:

Project Director: **Brooke Steinhauser**, Program Director at the Emily Dickinson Museum, oversees the Museum's tour program, public events, and educational outreach. Prior to joining the Museum in 2015, she served as southern Maine site manager for Historic New England, overseeing three historic properties including another writer's home, the Sarah Orne Jewett House. She holds an MA in history museum studies from the Cooperstown Graduate Program. As project director for interpretive planning at the EDM she will lead the Project Team working closely with ObjectIDEA, EDM staff and Board, and the Scholar Advisor and constituent groups during the course of the project.

Dr. Wendy Kohler is a member of the Museum's Board of Governors and chairs the Program Committee. She is an educational consultant and lecturer in the School of Education at UMass/Amherst. She retired in 2009 from her position as the Executive Director of Curriculum and Program Development for the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District, where she also held various administrative positions, and taught English and Social Studies. Kohler will participate in all Project Team meetings and liaise with the EDM Board of Governors around interpretive planning progress.

Dr. Karen Sánchez-Eppler is a member of the Museum's Board of Governors and sits on the Program Committee. As professor of American Studies and English and Chair of the English Department at Amherst College, she has taught seven undergraduate seminars on Emily Dickinson at the Museum. She wrote the catalog essay for the exhibit *Language as Object: Emily Dickinson and Contemporary Art*, and both her books, *Touching Liberty: Abolition, Feminism and the Politics of the Body* and *The Unpublished Republic: Manuscript Cultures of the Mid-Nineteenth-Century United States*, contain significant chapters on Dickinson. Her *Emily Dickinson Oxford Handbook*, co-edited with Cristanne Miller is forthcoming in 2019. Sánchez-Eppler will participate in all Project Team meetings.

Jane Wald is Executive Director of the Emily Dickinson Museum. Before beginning her tenure at the Dickinson sites in 2001, she worked at Old Sturbridge Village in Sturbridge, Massachusetts. She has been responsible for several major restoration and documentation studies at the Museum and is the author of "'Pretty much all real life': The Material World of the Dickinson Family," in the *Blackwell Companion to Emily Dickinson* (2008), and "The 'Poet Hunters': Transforming Emily Dickinson's Home into a Literary Destination," in the *Emily Dickinson Journal* (2018). In her capacity as Museum director, Wald will serve on the Project Team for interpretive planning and will help to administer the financial aspects of the NEH grant.

J) Consultants and Humanities scholars:

Two consultants from ObjectIDEA in Salem, Massachusetts, will work closely with the Project Team on interpretive planning:

Matt Kirchman is the Founder and President of ObjectIDEA and serves as the Creative Director of planning and design for all projects. He holds a Master of Science in Experiential Education and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Visual Communication from Northern Illinois University. For over 20 years, the interpretive design field has afforded him the opportunity to exercise his philosophies and methods in both schools of thinking. Kirchman was one of two independent consultants invited by the American Alliance of Museums to assist the organization in identifying the benchmarks for interpretive planning

that AAM will use to accredit its member institutions. ObjectIDEA has worked on projects of immediate relevance to the EDM interpretive planning, including: designs for the Walden Pond Visitor Education Center, and an interpretive plan for the House of the Seven Gables. Kirchman will spend approximately 30% of his time on the EDM Interpretive Planning project.

Jack Pittenger is an Exhibit Developer and Historian. He joined ObjectIDEA in 2013 after completing his Master's degree in Public History at Arizona State University. His background in Public History affords him the skills to make complex historical information accessible via effective and efficient presentation and writing. These interpretive skills have been put to use in diverse projects, including the Whaling Museum of the Nantucket Historical Association, the Worcester Historical Museum, and as a Guest Curator at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. Pittenger will spend approximately 40% of his time on the EDM Interpretive Planning project.

Scholar Advisors:

Dr. Martha Ackmann recently retired from a thirty-year career as a professor of Literature and Gender Studies at Mount Holyoke College. Her scholarly work has appeared in the *Emily Dickinson Journal*, the *Dickinson Encyclopedia*, and the anthology *The Emily Dickinson Handbook*. She has taught nine undergraduate seminars on Dickinson at the Emily Dickinson Museum and has served on the faculty in four different years of the Museum's NEH Landmarks of American History K–12 teacher workshops. She is the author of the biography *Vesuvius at Home: Ten Days in the Life, Loves, and Mystery of Emily Dickinson* (forthcoming 2019 Harper Collins/Smithsonian).

Dr. Christopher Benfey is Andrew W. Mellon Professor of English at Mount Holyoke College, where he has taught since 1989. A prolific journalist, Benfey served as the long-time art critic for the online magazine Slate and is a frequent contributor to *The New York Review of Books*, *The New York Times Book Review*, and *The New Republic*. A well-known scholar of Emily Dickinson, Benfey is the author of four books about the American Gilded Age, including *A Summer of Hummingbirds: Love, Art, and Scandal in the Intersecting Worlds of Emily Dickinson, Mark Twain, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Martin Johnson Heade*.

Dr. Renée Bergland is the Hazel Dick Leonard Research Professor of English at Simmons University. She teaches American Literature, Research and Writing, and Critical and Cultural Theory, and her pedagogy is based on an intersectional approaches to gender and race. At present, she holds a research appointment as Scholar in Residence in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Dartmouth College. Bergland sits on the board of the Emily Dickinson International Society (EDIS). Since 2001, she has presented sixteen conference papers on Dickinson and astronomy. In addition to her book reviews for the EDIS *Bulletin*, she has published two major essays on Dickinson: "Urania's Inversion: Emily Dickinson, Herman Melville, and the Strange History of Women Scientists in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 34:1 (Autumn 2008); and "The Eagle's Eye: Emily Dickinson's View of Battle," in *Blackwell's Companion to Emily Dickinson*, Ed. Mary Loeffelholz and Martha Nell Smith (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers 2008). Her current book project is *Planetary Poetics: Emily Dickinson and Literary Relativity*.

Dr. Cristanne Miller is Edward H. Butler Professor of English and Chair of the Department at the University at Buffalo in New York. Miller established her reputation as a foremost scholar of Emily Dickinson with the publication in 1987 of *Emily Dickinson: A Poet's Grammar*. She has served as President of the Emily Dickinson International Society. She currently serves on the advisory board for the Emily Dickinson Archive. Miller is the editor of the newest edition of the complete poems, *Emily Dickinson's Poems: As She Preserved Them* (2016 Harvard University Press).

Aífe Murray, multidisciplinary writer and artist, is the author of *Maid as Muse: How Servants Changed Emily Dickinson’s Life and Language* (non-fiction finalist, Northern California Book Award) which was the culminating moment of a transdisciplinary project, Kitchen Table Poetics, that also included art installations, poetry, and performance art. Murray was an affiliated scholar with Stanford University’s Institute for Research on Gender; the Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation Fellow at the Djerassi Resident Artists Program; and named the 2007 Scholar in Amherst by the Emily Dickinson International Society.

Dr. Martha Nell Smith is Distinguished Scholar-Teacher, Professor of English, and Founding Director of the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities at the University of Maryland. Her numerous print publications include *Emily Dickinson, A User’s Guide* (2016); *Companion to Emily Dickinson* (Jan 2008); *Open Me Carefully: Emily Dickinson’s Intimate Letters to Susan Dickinson* (1998; Choice); *Comic Power in Emily Dickinson* (1993; Choice); and *Rowing in Eden: Rereading Emily Dickinson* (1992). Smith is also Executive Editor of the Dickinson Electronic Archives and co-editor of “Emily Dickinson’s Correspondence: A Born-Digital Textual Inquiry.” Smith also serves on the Advisory Board of Harvard University Press’s Emily Dickinson Archive (<http://edickinson.org>), and is president of the Emily Dickinson International Society.

Dr. Marta Werner is a professor of English at D’Youville College. As a textual scholar and a foremost scholar of Dickinson’s late works, she is the author/editor of *Emily Dickinson’s Open Folios: Scenes of Reading, Surfaces of Writing* (1995) and *Radical Scatters: An Electronic Archive of Emily Dickinson’s Late Fragments and Related Texts, 1870-1886* (1999). Werner is co-editor of *The Gorgeous Nothings: Emily Dickinson’s Envelope-Poems* (Granary Books 2012/ New Directions 2013). She is a board member of the Emily Dickinson International Society, and serves on the advisory board for Harvard University’s Houghton Library “digital Dickinson” project. Currently, Werner is working on a public listening project, titled “These Tested Our Horizon: Listening to Dickinson’s Birds from the Shores of the Anthropocene,” that seeks to recreate some of the poet’s Amherst soundscape.

K) Work plan:

Timeframe:	Activity:	Participants:
August, 2019	Grant notice, finalize schedules with consultant and advisor groups	Project Director (PD)
September, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Project Team meeting #1: Discuss project goals, review work plan, explore existing audience data and evaluation, interpretive challenges and opportunities • Distribute advance reading to Scholar Advisors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Team, ObjectIDEA • PD
October, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research, tour observations ➤ Consultant led workshop: <i>Interpretive Opportunities and Goals</i>, Part 1. Discuss priorities and challenges in small groups by theme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ObjectIDEA and PD • Scholar Advisors, members of Project Team
November, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Consultant led workshop: <i>Interpretive Opportunities and Goals</i>, Part 2. Discuss visitor experience opportunities and challenges. ❖ Project Team meeting #2: Coalesce concepts from workshops to refine planning direction, discuss concepts for visitor experience • Preliminary themes and stories development continues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDM staff including guides, museum assistants • Project Team, ObjectIDEA • ObjectIDEA
December, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-up phone meeting to review identified opportunities and revised interpretive themes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholar Advisors, PD, ObjectIDEA • ObjectIDEA

	✓ Themes and stories development continues, with draft plan component submitted to project Team at end of month	
January, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Team review period: themes and stories component draft. ❖ Project Team meeting #3: Refine Themes and Stories, solidify focus group plans based on concepts for visitor experience ✓ Themes and Stories component draft sent to Scholar Advisors for written review, due end of February. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Team • Project Team, ObjectIDEA • PD, Scholar Advisors
February, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Focus groups: Three facilitated sessions focused on interpretive methods and themes. Groups are convened by interest: Students and educators; creativity and art; Dickinson fans • Process focus group findings to share with Project Team • Continued work on draft plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constituents groups, Project Team, ObjectIDEA • PD • ObjectIDEA
March, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Project Team meeting #4: Review focus group findings, refine concepts for visitor experience plan component, suggest formats for piloting in April • Develop simple pilots of new interpretive methods, train EDM staff to offer and evaluate. Formats to pilot: self-guided tour, immersive audio, and object- and inquiry-based engagement • Continued work on draft plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Team, ObjectIDEA • PD with Project Team and ObjectIDEA input • ObjectIDEA
April, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run simple pilots with formative evaluation ✓ Preliminary plan submittal: All components of draft Interpretive Plan completed and reviewed by Project Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PD with EDM Staff, constituents • Project Team
May, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Project Team meeting #5: Review and refine materials from ObjectIDEA, discussion on implementation ✓ Final plan refinements made and draft presented to Project Team by e-mail for written review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PD • ObjectIDEA
June, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final plan refinements are made ✓ End-of month: Final draft of Interpretive Plan completed and presented to EDM Board of Governors at annual meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Team and ObjectIDEA
July, 2020	❖ Project Team meeting #6: Set work plans for implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Team
August, 2020	Final report to NEH	PD

L) Project funding:

For this project the EDM will contribute Executive Director Jane Wald’s time and indirect costs at a total of (b) (6) in cost share. In-kind project support from Board members Karen Sanchez-Eppler and Wendy Kohler includes time spent as part of the Project Team. Each will volunteer nine days of time for a total of approximately sixty-three hours at a consulting rate of (b) (6) for a combined total of (b) (6).

This grant award will allow the EDM to bring on professional consultants, external advisors, and will allow Program Director Brooke Steinhauser to dedicate an appropriate amount of time to this essential planning process.

The Museum has a long history of strong financial management and has ended each fiscal year with a balanced budget. In addition to its operating budget, the Museum has successfully raised funds for numerous educational, restoration, and facilities projects in the last decade.