



EXPLORING THE HUMAN ENDEAVOR

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT
FOR THE HUMANITIES
ANNUAL REPORT

2015

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

August 2016

Dear Mr. President,

It is an honor to present the 2015 Annual Report for the National Endowment for the Humanities.

As NEH marked its 50th anniversary this year, we reflected on our original charter, our triumphs, and ways to support the humanities in the future.

On September 29, 1965, as President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act, he was surrounded by scholars, artists, teachers, and political and cultural leaders in the White House Rose Garden. Fifty years later, NEH has made more than 63,000 grants totaling \$5.3 billion, and leveraged an additional \$2.5 billion in matching funds. Those grants have helped fulfill NEH's mission to support humanities research and scholarship, to advance teaching and learning, to preserve cultural assets and heritage, and to make cultural resources available to the American people.

In an effort to extend those resources to new audiences, NEH established The Common Good in January 2015, an Endowment-wide initiative to bring humanities topics out of the ivory tower and into the discourse of the public sphere. Author Judith Dupré received one of the first Public Scholar grants awarded to researchers writing for the general public. Her resulting book, *One World Trade Center*, gives an insider's look at the politics, planning, and construction challenges that arose in rebuilding a national icon. Thoroughly researched and intelligently written, the book offers an accessible and beautiful entry into a compelling but complicated subject.

Also part of The Common Good is a project at the University of Mississippi that brings together scholars, students, artists, and teachers to discuss civil rights literacy. The project will collect oral histories related to the civil rights movement and make them available online through the Mississippi Civil Rights Project. In Maryland, The Common Good offers public forums to examine how race has shaped the identity of Baltimore, and in Pennsylvania, residents of a traditionally agricultural area come together to discuss issues of food and how they profoundly affect different communities.

Thousands of significant books of humanities scholarship published in the last hundred years have gone out of print. They are an untapped resource of research and knowledge. NEH is partnering with the Mellon Foundation for the Humanities Open Book Program, which will digitize these titles and make them accessible online forever. By placing these works into the hands of the public we hope that the program will provide access to the important ideas they contain and inspire readers, teachers, and students to use these books in exciting new ways.

More than 7 million students are enrolled in two-year colleges across the country. In order to build citizenship by strengthening humanities teaching at these institutions, NEH began Humanities Initiatives at Community Colleges. Projects funded through this initiative will create new humanities courses, develop paths for nontraditional students, and bring the humanities into professional training programs.

The humanities are vital to American democracy, yet the central democratic ideals of our country are not self-sustaining. They must be reengaged, generation by generation, and adjusted to new circumstances. Supporting such work, and supporting projects that encourage the public to engage with the past and think through its implications for today, sit at the very heart of the mission of NEH.



William D. Adams

Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities



NEH CHAIRMAN WILLIAM D. ADAMS
—PHOTO BY FRED FIELD, COURTESY OF COLBY COLLEGE

SUMMARY OF GRANTS AND AWARDS FY 2015

Division/Program	Number ¹	Amount Obligated ²		
		Outright	Matching ³	Total
EDUCATION PROGRAMS	115	\$13,840,573	--	\$13,840,573
PRESERVATION AND ACCESS	164	\$16,672,741	\$392,952	\$17,065,693
PUBLIC PROGRAMS	97	\$17,139,333	\$500,750	\$17,640,083
RESEARCH PROGRAMS	284	\$16,113,274	\$999,999	\$17,113,273
CHALLENGE GRANTS	57	--	\$7,814,713	\$7,814,713
DIGITAL HUMANITIES	37	\$4,693,016	--	\$4,693,016
FEDERAL/STATE PARTNERSHIP	58	\$42,153,041	\$448,700	\$42,601,741
MISC. HUMANITIES PROJECTS	10	\$771,524	--	\$771,524
Total	822	\$111,383,502	\$10,157,115	\$121,540,617

FOOTNOTES:

^{1/} New grants, supplemental awards on previous years' grants, transfers to other agencies, and program contracts.

^{2/} Totals include obligations for new grants, supplemental grants, program contracts, and other program-related purposes. Included are awards that are (a) made by NEH using appropriated funds, including funds appropriated to the We the People and Bridging Cultures initiatives, (b) made by NEH using program funds transferred to the Endowment by other federal agencies, and (c) made by NEH using funds contributed by nonfederal entities.

^{3/} Totals include definite program funds used to match gifts.

Note: Detail may not add to totals due to rounding.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

In 2015, the National Endowment for the Humanities awarded \$121,540,617 to 822 humanities projects through 7 separate funding offices (Education Programs, Preservation and Access, Public Programs, Research Programs, Challenge Grants, Digital Humanities, and Federal/State Partnership). After reviewing the grant recommendations of 996 peer review panelists and a 26-member presidentially appointed council, NEH Chairman William D. Adams made all final decisions on the awarding of grants.

September 29, 2015, was the official kickoff for a year of celebrating the Endowment's 50th anniversary. It was marked by a digital event on Twitter, by which thousands of grantees, educational institutions, federal agencies, and others participated in a one-hour meetup on Twitter, where they completed the sentence, "I love the humanities because..." Chef Alice Waters declared she loves the humanities because "they help us realize the full depth of our human potential." Senator Kirsten Gillibrand remarked, "I love the humanities because #NY wouldn't be #NY without its museums, libraries, universities & cultural institutions!" Dorothy Kosinski, head of the Phillips Collection, wrote that the humanities "tell our most important stories across time." According to analytics, the digital event reached millions of Twitter accounts, demonstrating high engagement across the country and the world with NEH and the humanities.

On the same day, NEH launched an independent website, 50.neh.gov, featuring 51 NEH-sponsored projects revealing the depth and variety of what NEH has supported over the last half century: from underwater archaeology to narrative medicine, from "The Treasures of Tutankhamun" to the digital Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. On September 25 and 26, NEH's founding was the subject of a two-day symposium called "Democracy and the Humanities, 1965–2015" held at Loyola University in Baltimore.

In April, author, actress, and playwright Anna Deavere Smith delivered the 44th annual Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. More a performance than lecture, her presentation, "On the Road: A Search for American Character," brought in the words and voices of people Smith has interviewed during her thirty-year documentary theater project. She opened the show in character, playing Studs Terkel as he opined on Huck Finn and closed with a portrayal of Congressman John Lewis describing his cathartic encounter with a man who had attacked him during the Freedom Rides of 1961.

In the summer of 2015, with a \$1.5 million grant from NEH, the American Library Association announced that 203 libraries and other nonprofit organizations across 42 states and the District of Columbia were awarded grants to participate in "Latino Americans: 500 Years of History." Centered on the NEH-funded, six-part 2013 documentary *Latino Americans*, institutions around the country have hosted screenings and discussions, collected oral histories, displayed exhibitions, and planned other activities about Latino American culture throughout the year.

As 2015 wound down, NEH made all 50 years of its grant records available online in a searchable database. These records went back to 1960s-era "McBee" punch cards, including NEH's first grant awarded in 1966 to the American Society of Papyrologists for a summer institute at Yale University.



TEACHERS EXCAVATE AT THE DILLARD SITE NEAR CORTEZ, COLORADO, AS PART OF A WORKSHOP AT THE CROW CANYON ARCHAEOLOGICAL CENTER.
—COURTESY CROW CANYON, WWW.CROWCANYON.ORG

Division of Education Programs

The goal of NEH’s Division of Education Programs is to strengthen the teaching of the humanities at all levels, from K–12 classrooms to community colleges and the halls of great universities. Through intensive summer programs with recognized scholars, teachers deepen their understanding of humanities subjects. Other grant programs support the development of new curricula and other educational projects and the enhancement of existing course content.

2015 HIGHLIGHTS

A Humanities Initiatives at Hispanic-Serving Institutions grant of \$99,982 went to Angelo State University in San Angelo, Texas, for a three-year project to compile, preserve, share, and analyze the experiences of **America’s warriors and their families** from World War I to the present day. The project directors and their students examine the similarities, differences, and challenges faced by American soldiers with a connection to West Texas by focusing on six themes: motivation for service, public support for the conflict, familial support and challenges, experience of wartime service, interaction with foreigners, and challenges of returning to civilian life.

A two-week Summer Seminar for college and university teachers on **Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America***, held at the University of Virginia, received a \$75,368 grant from NEH. The seminar offered intellectual engagement with this classic study of democracy as both a political system and a social form. Tocqueville’s insights go to the heart of those “democratic values” that are frequently invoked in contemporary political debate but less frequently examined. This two-week seminar examined the meaning of those values and showed how they bear on current discourse.

Crow Canyon Archaeological Center in Cortez, Colorado, received a \$175,000 grant to hold a Landmarks of American History and Culture Workshop. The resulting weeklong, residence-based workshops served a total of 36 schoolteachers, who visited **Mesa Verde National Park and the Indian Camp Ranch** Archaeological District to consider three fundamental questions: 1) Who creates America’s history and culture? 2) How do we come to understand the cultural development, people, and activities that comprise the past and inform the present? 3) How did people in the past use their knowledge and creativity to cope with population growth in an ever-changing environment?



THE MONHEGAN MUSEUM IN MAINE. —ALAN LAVALLEE PHOTOGRAPHY

Division of Preservation and Access

Projects funded through NEH’s Division of Preservation and Access help ensure the longevity and accessibility of the nation’s cultural heritage. Much of our cultural legacy resides in books, serials, manuscripts, sound recordings, still and moving images, works of art, and digital collections at museums, libraries, and archives. NEH helps institutions preserve these collections and make them accessible to the public.

2015 HIGHLIGHTS

The American Foundation for the Blind in New York City received a \$300,000 grant for the digitization of the **Helen Keller Archives**, comprising 80,000 items, and enabling free online access to the collection. When she died in 1968, Keller bequeathed her collection of correspondence with twentieth-century leaders, intellectuals, and disabled individuals, as well as photographs, artifacts, architectural drawings, and scrapbooks. Born in 1880, Keller, who became blind and deaf from a childhood illness, was a world-renowned author, suffragist, political activist, and spokesperson for the disabled. The materials in the collection will be made accessible to scholars and the interested public.

The University of California, Berkeley, is the repository of more than 2,500 early twentieth-century **wax cylinder recordings of Native American speech and song** recorded between 1901 and 1938, including some of the only known recordings of certain languages. With a \$199,261 Documenting Endangered Languages grant in partnership with the National Science Foundation, the university will apply new technology (developed at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory) to produce optical scans of all wax cylinders in the university’s collection, from which audio transfers will be created, improving on previous methods that produced low-quality sound files.

The collection of the **Monhegan Historical and Cultural Museum** includes works by more than 150 artists—including Robert Henri, George Bellows, Rockwell Kent, and Edward Hopper—and artifacts that document over 4,000 years of cultural and natural history of Monhegan Island. Ten miles off the coast of Maine, the island was a Native American settlement, a refuge for those escaping the French and Indian War, and then an artists’ colony beginning in 1858. With a \$300,000 Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections grant, the museum will improve its energy efficiency through better lighting and non-mechanical climate control, and optimize climate control systems in the museum’s off-season storage vaults.



STILL FROM *THE VIETNAM WAR* SHOWS MEMBERS OF A COMPANY 1ST BATTALION, 8TH CAVALRY, 1ST BRIGADE ADVANCE THROUGH RICE PADDIES IN OCTOBER 1966.
—THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

Division of Public Programs

NEH's Division of Public Programs supports projects that bring a variety of humanities topics to a diverse and wide audience through museum and library exhibitions, reading and discussion series, television and radio documentaries, the interpretation of historic sites, digital media projects, and history and literature programs at hundreds of local libraries and cultural organizations.

2015 HIGHLIGHTS

A grant of \$1 million was awarded to WETA for production of *The Vietnam War*, a ten-part, 18-hour television documentary series by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick that brings to life one of the defining events of American history. Airing on PBS in 2017, the film presents the war chronologically and through the voices of people who experienced it firsthand. The film is informed by recent scholarship about the war and built around interviews with nearly a hundred American and Vietnamese witnesses, as well as material from newly available Vietnamese archival resources.

The Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York City received \$300,000 from NEH to create tour content and interactive media for an exhibit that tells the stories of three immigrant families who moved to 103 Orchard Street between the 1950s and 1980s—a German-Jewish couple who survived the Holocaust, a Puerto Rican family, and a Chinese family from Hong Kong. The Museum will install this exhibit in the recently acquired 1888 tenement. This exhibit includes oral histories, photographs, and ambient sound related to all three families; an interactive subway map offering interviews with present-day immigrant New Yorkers; and a series of free public lectures.

The American Library Association received a grant of \$359,975 for **“The Great Stories Club,”** a reading and discussion program for at-risk youth. By reading novels, memoirs, and nonfiction selected for them by scholars, participants explore such themes as civic engagement in an age of mass media, the role of creative arts in dealing with change, and the problems of teenage violence and suicide.



THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER, PUBLISHED BY CURRIER & IVES, BETWEEN 1850 AND 1910. —LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Division of Research Programs

NEH's Division of Research Programs supports scholarly research that advances knowledge and understanding of the humanities. Awards are made to individuals and groups of scholars for projects of significance to specific fields and to the humanities as a whole. Through grants for research, translation, scholarly editions, and archaeological work, NEH-funded research brings forth knowledge that has long-term benefits for humanities education and public programming.

2015 HIGHLIGHTS

Mark Clague of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor received a \$50,400 Public Scholar grant to write a book on the forgotten musical history of the **“Star Spangled Banner.”** Based on ten years of archival work, Clague reveals that Francis Scott Key's national anthem was one of hundreds of patriotic and protest songs set to the same tune. Clague proposes that Key's musical question—“Oh say can you see?”—captured the democratic aspirations of a new country.

David Landon of the University of Massachusetts, Boston, received a \$200,000 award to conduct new **excavations at Plymouth Colony.** An important English settlement in the New World, Plymouth Colony was last excavated in the 1970s when archaeologists uncovered its commercial center. Recent discoveries have led Landon and his team to examine spaces outside the town center where, they believe, interactions occurred between colonists and native peoples. The excavation will be publicly accessible and play a part in Plymouth Colony's 400th anniversary celebration in 2020.

Gwen Westerman of Minnesota State University, Mankato, received a \$194,774 grant to edit and translate into English **first-person narratives of Dakota people** from the nineteenth century. The documents—mostly letters—discuss daily life and experiences with government officials and policies. Westerman and her team of linguists, anthropologists, and historians will transfer the documents, translations, and notes into digital format for scholars and students to better understand the complexity of Native American history.



KOI ORNAMENT PORTLAND OREGON'S HISTORIC JAPANESE GARDEN. —JONATHAN LEY

Office of Challenge Grants

Projects funded through NEH's Office of Challenge Grants have helped local, state, and national institutions secure their humanities resources and activities for the long term. Historically, recipients of a challenge grant have matched every federal dollar with three (in some cases, two) nonfederal dollars. These funds have been used to purchase equipment and upgrade technology, to build or renovate facilities, or to increase a library's holdings or a museum's collections. Challenge grants have also supported endowments for staffing or programming well into the future.

2015 HIGHLIGHTS

The Portland Japanese Garden Society in Oregon is building a new educational facility with a \$500,000 challenge grant to match \$1,500,000 raised from nongovernment sources. The society contains five distinct gardens representing more than 1,000 years of Japanese culture. The new buildings for the educational facilities are designed by one of Japan's leading architects, Kengo Kuma, and the humanities programs offered in them will have formal and informal learning programs to help visitors understand Japanese culture through literature, philosophy, religion, language, and history.

The Museum of Northern Arizona, an 88-year-old regional museum, was awarded a matching grant of \$122,524, for which it raised \$367,574 in gift funds. The grant will support the renovation of the ethnology section of the **Native Peoples of the Colorado Plateau** exhibit as the museum begins to renovate its entire exhibits program. Located in Flagstaff near the Grand Canyon National Park and Hopi and Navajo territories, MNA serves a diverse local community and attracts more than 51,000 visitors each year.

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site, home and workplace of the artist Thomas Cole in Catskill, New York, received a \$300,000 challenge grant, for which it raised three times that amount in outside funds, to create an endowment for humanities exhibitions, community and school programs, and honoraria for speakers and fellows. Cole's site is an important place in the history of the Hudson River School, a group of artists who innovated landscape painting in America in the mid nineteenth century. The organization recently reconstructed Thomas Cole's New Studio, a building of Cole's own design that was built in 1846 but was demolished in 1973. Expecting an increase in attendance, the site will expand its programming with this endowment.



MODEL OF THE CHURCHYARD OF ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL WAS CONSTRUCTED BY JOSHUA STEPHENS AND RENDERED BY JORDAN GRAY.
—VIRTUAL PAUL'S CROSS PROJECT (VPCP.CHASS.NCSU.EDU)

Office of Digital Humanities

NEH's Office of Digital Humanities supports efforts to use computing tools for research and teaching. Funded projects have involved data visualization, putting searchable archival material online, and crowd-sourcing transcriptions of texts. The field is changing the ways material can be searched, mined, displayed, taught, and analyzed. These grants often facilitate partnerships with other funding bodies in the United States and abroad.

2015 HIGHLIGHTS

The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (slavevoyages.org) was first supported in 1993 with an NEH award to Harvard University. The project moved to Emory University and went online in 2008. The database now contains information on 35,000 slave voyages and 67,000 individuals, and is an essential resource used by historians and students around the world who are studying the transatlantic slave trade. In 2015, Emory received a \$324,992 grant from NEH to fund a major overhaul of the website—adding new data and modernizing the infrastructure. This will help ensure this critical scholarly resource remains available for wide use.

North Carolina State University is developing methods for acoustic analysis of simulated three-dimensional spaces. In its test case, the university virtually reconstructed seventeenth-century **St. Paul's Cathedral** in London, the site where John Donne gave his landmark Gunpowder Day sermon in 1622. The project, with a \$324,135 NEH grant, is creating open-source software that will allow researchers to analyze the sound within this virtual space, gaining insight into not only the cadence of Donne's speech, but also to understand who could actually hear his words within the cathedral courtyard.

With a \$245,299 grant, Purdue University in Indiana in cooperation with Hamilton College in New York hosts a three-week summer institute and follow-up workshop for 20 scholars to explore how spatial technologies, such as mapping, can enhance the **study of the African diaspora**. The institute shows how to use three-dimensional modeling and graphic rendering of data to help examine black history and culture. Attendees learn from experts on the latest applications of geographic information systems and how they can be applied to research and teaching in the humanities.



THE WISCONSIN HUMANITIES COUNCIL HOLDS TALKS ABOUT MILWAUKEE'S MATTHEWS BROTHERS COMPANY, WHO MANUFACTURED FURNITURE DESIGNED BY FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT. —DETAIL VIEW OF MARTIN HOUSE RECEPTION ROOM WITH TWO PILLAR BACK CHAIRS, "DOUBLE X" TABLE, AND SATSUMA VASE. BIFF HENRICH / IMG_INK, COURTESY FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT'S DARWIN D. MARTIN HOUSE

Office of Federal/State Partnership

Through the Office of Federal/State Partnership, grants are made to 56 state and territory humanities councils for operating costs and special projects. This partnership helps make humanities education and lifelong learning available to serve local interests and needs. The councils—operating in all 50 states and in the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa—employ more than 500 staff members and engage over 1,000 board members.

2015 HIGHLIGHTS

Humanities Montana's program **Hometown Humanities** won a Schwartz Prize for intensively partnering with a single rural Montana community each year. In 2015, the council helped Lincoln County, an area encompassing several communities spread over 3,675 square miles, hold 35 different programs in the space of ten months. These included a monthly workshop on memoir writing, dozens of school programs, a series on women in Montana's history, and 15 separate events celebrating National Poetry Month. Hometown Humanities continues with its fourth year of programming in 2016.

More than 1,000 people gathered in communities across Massachusetts for the annual communal readings of **Frederick Douglass's speech** "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" in 2015. The event, sponsored by Mass Humanities, commemorates Independence Day by remembering the struggles for achieving freedom and equality in the United States. Douglass's thought-provoking words were followed by discussions, panels, and other programming organized by local groups. The readings also took place in Vermont and North Carolina through those state councils.

Wisconsin Humanities Council's ongoing **"Working Lives"** initiative probes the diversity and meaning of work, paid and unpaid, across the state through public events, radio programs, exhibits, and online resources. The council offers more than 40 "Shop Talks," on such topics as starting a business on a Menominee Indian Reservation or the building of Frank Lloyd Wright's iconic barrel chair by Milwaukee's Matthews Brothers Company Furniture. The initiative also includes the traveling exhibition "Working Warriors: Military Life Beyond Combat" and radio essays by people working in Wisconsin.

COVER: *A VIEW OF TWO LAKES AND MOUNTAIN HOUSE, MORNING*, 1844, BY THOMAS COLE. OIL ON CANVAS, 35-13/16 X 53-7/8 IN. BROOKLYN MUSEUM, BROOKLYN, NY. DICK S. RAMSAY FUND, 52.16



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