The Federation of State Humanities Councils and the National Humanities Alliance are pleased to announce the 2023 National Humanities Conference, to be held in Indianapolis, Indiana, October 25-29, 2023. In keeping with the state motto of Indiana, “The Crossroads of America,” the 2023 conference theme is “Crossroads.”

A crossroads is a space both real and conceptual. It is a singular and plural term, referring to the many sorts of connections at which separate ways meet. Metaphorically, a crossroads is a place where a choice can, sometimes must, be made—an intersection, a forking path, an opportunity for new trajectories. In a public moment ripe with divergences and impediments to progress, we seek proposals that explore the potential of the public humanities to clear paths and to orient us as we navigate connective points with a commitment to justice, community, and the necessity of shared civic space, as well as respect for honest points of disagreement.

Arriving at a crossroads may mean that our current path has carried us as far as its last useful point and a different one now calls us forward. A crossroads can allow independent roads to share, however briefly, a liminal or transformative space within which even those headed in different directions may find the wisdom to give ground, to become fellow travelers, or to change course. A crossroads may even signify a trailblazing access point for community progress and enfranchisement—an opportunity, as Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said in his 1967 speech “Where Do We Go from Here?” for those “who live on the outskirts of Hope” to be “brought into the metropolis of daily security.”

Crossroads may be:

**Opportunities for reflection** Approaching a crossroads, we decelerate briefly, in order to evaluate present conditions and weigh the options presented by the space we’re about to enter. We may also use this pause to reflect on our progress: What goals, choices, or decisions led us to inhabit this moment, this space? What connections, midpoint stops, or unexpected detours resulted in our arrival here? What sources of energy were sufficient to bring us this far? Will new or alternative sources be needed to move us forward?

**Intersections and points of contact** At a crossroads, even paths that seem at cross-purposes may create unique opportunities for collaboration or space-sharing. What unexpected connections, partnerships, or points of connection allow for unique, innovative, or trailblazing projects? Where and how do the contemporary humanities now “intersect” with other fields, engage with nontraditional spaces, or reach underserved audiences through innovative strategies? Conversely, are there any kinds of intersections that may slow or
impede our work, requiring us to pivot quickly and strategically in order to ensure our forward momentum?

**Places for new/changing directions** Every crossroads is potentially a terminus point for one path, and the start of a new one. As humanists and educators, how do we recognize the moments when one phase of our work has reached its end, and new options open up before us? How do we select a new trajectory from the multiple options before us? How do we navigate shared spaces and recognize the opportunity to join with fellow travelers who have also arrived at this point, via a different route? Should one or another of us now "lead" the caravan to its next point? And if our paths must diverge at some future crossroads, how may we work to best use and honor this shared span of our journey?

The 2023 National Humanities Conference invites proposals that examine and/or inhabit these and other zones of choice and possibility—creative, reflective, and forward-looking—in which we may consider how the public humanities have arrived at their current place, what that place looks like to us today, and where we wish to go from here. We especially encourage proposals that engage humanities practitioners, professionals, and scholars/academics to discuss shared or aligned destinations as well as proposals that explore and delineate how and why we diverge.

We also welcome proposals that share best practices of humanities organizations and examine ways to build organizational and field capacity, including the following.

- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access (DEIA): how to operationalize practices across nonprofit organizations, including programming, board recruitment, disaggregating data, and staff hiring and retention
- Fundraising and development: how to cultivate support from private and public entities including grant writing, annual appeals, individual planned giving, and crowdfunding campaigns, as well as what new trends are emerging as philanthropic entities shift focus
- Communication strategies: how to enhance digital capacity and offerings, build programmatic accessibility, and communicate through diverse media outlets to reach increasingly fragmented audiences
- Advocacy and case-making: how to develop strategies at the local, state, and national levels
- Audience cultivation: how to broaden (socio-economically, politically, geographically, etc.) audiences for public humanities work

**Session Formats:**

We encourage sessions in the following formats:

- **Offsite Session:** These sessions take place outside of the conference hotel but ideally within walking distance! They introduce participants to an aspect of the Indianapolis’ humanities landscape or to a type of humanities program that is best introduced beyond the hotel walls (i.e. programs that engage with the environment or monuments). Indiana Humanities is on hand to support you in developing one of these sessions. Contact Hailey
DeWolf at Indiana Humanities (hdewolf@indianahumanities.org) for support identifying locations and building out ideas.

- **Workshop**: A hands-on session that teaches a particular skill set associated with program development, communications, collaboration, assessment, development/fundraising, cultivating new audiences, or any other aspect of humanities programming.

- **Interview**: These sessions feature a free-form dialogue between a humanities professional and an interviewer.

- **Roundtable**: Roundtables consist of a group of no more than five humanities practitioners (including moderator) discussing a topic in front of an audience, rather than each presenting discrete remarks. A moderator leads the discussion and poses questions, but all participants speak equally about the topics.

- **Panel**: This traditional format includes a moderator and no more than three presenters. Presentations are timed so that at least half the session consists of moderator questions and discussion with the audience.

- **Working groups**: Working groups are seminar-like conversations of at least eight people that explore, in-depth, a subject of shared interest. Working groups will be accepted even if they do not have eight participants, but additional participants will need to be recruited after the session is accepted. The working group convenes for a session at the conference, but also converses before the conference and develops a product after. Each working group will have a facilitator, responsible for organizing the pre- and post-conference exchanges and facilitating the conversation at the conference itself. Working groups can open up for audience observers or confine participation to the members of the working group.

**Individual Presentations:**

We also invite individual proposals. Individuals can submit a proposal for an **Individual Flash Presentation**. Individual flash presentations are five-minute presentations that relate to one of the *crossroads* themes listed above. The program committee will curate lightning round sessions of four to five similarly-themed presentations.

For questions regarding the online submission form, please contact events@statehumanities.org.

**About the Federation of State Humanities Councils**

Founded in 1977, the Federation of State Humanities Councils is the national member association of the U.S. state and jurisdictional humanities councils. The Federation’s purpose is to provide leadership, advocacy, and information to help members advance programs that engage millions of citizens across diverse populations in community and civic life.

**About the Councils**

The state humanities councils are independent nonprofit organizations supporting and creating grassroots humanities programs and community-based activities. Humanities councils were established by Congress in the early 1970s and receive an annual congressional appropriation
through the National Endowment for the Humanities, which most councils supplement with state and private funding.

The National Humanities Alliance

The National Humanities Alliance (NHA) is a nationwide coalition of organizations advocating for the humanities on campuses, in communities, and on Capitol Hill. Founded in 1981, NHA is supported by over 250 member organizations, including: colleges, universities, libraries, museums, cultural organizations, state humanities councils, and scholarly, professional, and higher education associations. It is the only organization that brings together the U.S. humanities community as a whole.