

# Humanities for All

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*Essays on the Public Humanities  
in Higher Education*



National  
Humanities  
Alliance

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# Introduction

Building off the *Humanities for All* database of over 2,000 higher-ed based public humanities projects and 62 in-depth profiles, the *Humanities for All* team authored three essays in 2018 and 2019 that explore trends across public humanities projects. These essays create a typology for public humanities projects, delve into the goals that animate public humanities projects, and explore the mutually beneficial partnerships between scholars and community organizations that underpin so much of this work. A final essay, authored in 2022, explores the role that scholarly societies play in the public humanities ecosystem, both by engaging the public directly while drawing on the tools of their disciplines and by recognizing and providing essential support to scholars who are carrying out publicly engaged work.

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# A Typology of the Publicly Engaged Humanities

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Daniel Fisher-Livne, National Humanities Alliance



Students using Clio to discover archival materials relating to the world around them. Image courtesy of Clio.

Publicly engaged humanities work has proliferated at colleges and universities across the U.S. over the last 10 years, as the over 1,500 initiatives compiled on *Humanities for All* illustrate.

In order to foster and raise the profile of publicly engaged humanities work in U.S. higher education, *Humanities for All* offers a rich collection of examples of this work—searchable, sortable, and illustrated with select in-depth profiles. In collecting these examples, we searched existing resources that feature publicly engaged humanities work (including grants databases, conference proceedings, and publications), interviewed leaders in the field, and issued calls for participation through NHA’s members. While we will continue to collect new examples to ensure that *Humanities for All* captures developments in the field, to date five distinct—but very often overlapping—types of engagement have emerged:

▶ **Outreach**

scholarly programming and media for a general audience;

▶ **Engaged Public Programming**

public programming in which the primary objective is not to transfer knowledge but to cultivate an exchange between facilitators and participants concerning matters of shared interest;

▶ **Engaged Research**

research initiatives in which higher education faculty and students partner with community members in the creation of knowledge;

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### ▶ **Engaged Teaching**

higher education instruction involving engaged research, teaching, and public programming; and

### ▶ **The Infrastructure of Engagement**

research and institutional structures that support engaged scholarship.

For faculty and students interested in embarking on or deepening their publicly engaged work, these five types offer a menu of possibilities that can be drawn on individually or combined. For advocates seeking to broaden narratives about the humanities in higher education, these five types can serve as a structure for articulating the public value of the humanities to students, parents, administrators, and elected officials. They can articulate the range of ways in which the humanities are addressing society's pressing concerns, broadening perceptions of what humanities work can involve and impact.

## **Outreach**

A first and well-established type of public engagement in the humanities in U.S. higher education involves outreach: the sharing of university-created knowledge with communities. Outreach activities include:

- Lectures for public audiences on and off campus;
- Websites, apps, and podcasts for public audiences;
- Exhibitions at museums, libraries, and online;
- Books, blogs, and op-eds for the public; and
- Consulting and producing reports grounded in disciplinary knowledge for media and public partners.

The dominant mode of engagement in projects included in this category is unidirectional, that is emanating from faculty members or students outward into the community. Consider, for example, Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes at colleges and universities across the U.S. These campus-based institutes offer noncredit programs for older adults, creating opportunities for outreach and enrichment involving the humanities. However, in many cases, there is an exchange of some kind. Audience members and participants are not necessarily passive consumers of content; they can often shape programming through their participation and feedback.

For faculty and students, the experience of planning and executing outreach activities can often impact their professional practice. Barry Lam, a philosopher at Vassar College, articulates the impact of his publicly engaged work—the podcast *Hi-Phi Nation*—on his own scholarship. Podcasting offers Lam new ways to connect with audience members. In academic philosophical writing, there is a rigor that moves the field forward. Through his podcasting work, Lam has come to see the complementary value of writing that is less regimented and perhaps more likely to have a broader appeal.

Outreach can also be a component of broader programs of engaged humanities scholarship. Consider, for example, “Art of the Hunt: Wyoming Traditions”—an exhibition at the Wyoming State Museum that documents Wyoming's hunting and fishing culture, arts, and lore. The exhibition itself fits within the category of outreach,

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but it was based on five years of fieldwork by University of Wyoming folklife specialist Andrea Graham and American studies master's degree students, interviewing artisans including saddle makers, taxidermists, and fly tiers. In addition to incorporating these artisans' work into the exhibition, a number also came to the museum to demonstrate their crafts and to share their stories in events supported by a grant from the Wyoming Humanities Council.

### **Engaged Public Programming**

Engaged public programs are distinguishable from the outreach activities discussed above in that their primary objective is not to transfer knowledge but rather to cultivate an exchange between facilitators and participants concerning subjects of mutual interest. Programming of this sort has long been a key contribution of state humanities councils. For example, The Conversation Project, led by Oregon Humanities, equips Oregonians to facilitate conversations on matters of public concern.

To appreciate how this model can be implemented in higher education institutions, consider the Encounters Series at the University of Connecticut (UConn) Humanities Institute. Programs in the Encounters Series bring UConn humanities faculty into dialogue with community members about issues like citizenship and wealth inequality in the U.S. The Encounters Series is a fully collaborative and collective endeavor, produced in partnership with off-campus centers including the Hartford Public Library, the Wadsworth Atheneum, and the Amistad Center for Art & Culture. These community partners play equal roles in determining the subjects of the conversations and planning the events, in addition to building connections with the community. Each session revolves around the group analysis of a significant “text,” including, among other things, writings, images, and pieces of music. Through a structured conversation in small groups with members of the Encounters team, participants share their thoughts and assemble a list of questions they would like to ask an expert. When each table is primed with questions, the Encounters team brings in a subject-matter expert from the university or the community for a discussion based on each table's questions.

### **Engaged Research**

Engaged research—often referred to as community-based, participatory, or action research—involves collaboration between higher education faculty and students and community members that creates knowledge.

A good example of this approach is “I’m Still Surviving,” a design and oral and public history project that documents, interprets, and presents women's experiences with HIV/AIDS in the U.S. Led by historian Jennifer Brier at the University of Illinois at Chicago and designer Matthew Wizinsky at the University of Cincinnati as a part of the History Moves initiative, the “I’m Still Surviving” project is a partnership with women living with HIV/AIDS in Brooklyn, NY, Chicago, IL, and Raleigh-Durham, NC. Almost all of these women have been part of the Women's Interagency HIV Study (WIHS)—a longitudinal medical research project established in 1993. With “I’m Still Surviving,” the participating women become the researchers. Together with their university-based partners, they collect and analyze oral history interviews to produce books and traveling exhibitions on their experiences as women living with HIV. Through this collaborative work, “I’m Still Surviving” is broadening historical understanding of HIV/AIDS and breaking new ground in oral and public history practice.

Scribes of the Cairo Geniza represents another compelling engaged research project. The international partnership led by the University of Pennsylvania Libraries and Zooniverse mobilizes volunteer humanists to identify,



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decipher, and transcribe pre-modern and medieval texts in Hebrew and Arabic script from the geniza (storeroom) of the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Fustat, Egypt. These texts offer an unparalleled window into Jewish and non-Jewish cultural and commercial history in the region, especially during the 10–13th centuries. With a sample size this large, dispersed, and diverse, Samantha Blickhan of the Adler Planetarium and Zooniverse suggests that crowdsourcing presents a fruitful way forward for research and public access. “Online volunteering ... offer[s] an alternative or complementary form of engagement that has many benefits,” Blickhan notes. “Online projects can reach a wider range of individuals, including those who are less able-bodied or geographically remote from the institution in which they want to volunteer and/or unable to travel. This is particularly useful for a dataset like the Geniza fragments, due to their wide range of geographic locations across institutions.”

### **Engaged Teaching**

Engaged teaching projects integrate public engagement—whether through outreach, engaged public programming, or engaged research—into undergraduate and graduate instruction. The results can enhance curricula with project-based learning that benefits both the higher education institution and the community partners.

Clio—a GPS-enabled app and website for sharing local history—is an example of a project that uses digital technologies to incorporate public engagement into undergraduate humanities classrooms. Illinois College’s Jenny Barker-Devine has used Clio in a first-year classroom to create entries for significant locations in Jacksonville, IL. “Clio offered an ideal entry-level platform,” Barker-Devine writes. “I wanted students to not only learn technical skills, but also to take on a local history project that would develop their research capabilities, promote civic engagement, and foster a connection with Jacksonville, the students’ home for the next four years.” The class’s ultimate impact was significant, Barker-Devine concludes: “As they honed a variety of skills, from historical research and writing to public speaking and marketing, they came to appreciate the broader applications of history outside of the classroom and as a vehicle for civic engagement.”

At California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB), engaged teaching is an integral part of the student experience through service learning that offers opportunities for personal, professional, and community development. Seth Pollack of CSUMB explains that the university’s service-learning programs address issues of social responsibility and social justice. “We see service learning as a way to rethink the knowledge of your discipline through the lenses of service, social responsibility, and social justice,” Pollack says. Humanities students in the museum studies program and the oral history and community memory program have become directly involved in telling a more inclusive version of the region’s history through the Salinas Chinatown Oral History Project. Pollack says, “these programs have worked with the Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino immigrant communities to help build the foundation of a new Asian American museum in Salinas, which is our county seat, to be able to tell the hidden history, and the important role that these communities played in our region.” This work has impacted both students and the Chinatown community in tangible ways, deepening disciplinary knowledge through service, social responsibility, and social justice; equipping students with critical skills and experience through the humanities; and helping to revitalize the neighborhood and its residents.

Publicly engaged teaching can also prepare graduate students for a variety of career paths, as Joseph Stanhope Cialdella of the University of Michigan has noted. A powerful example of this comes from the Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation (WUDPAC), where public engagement is an integral component of graduate education. Art Conservation MA students build critical skills by working with

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community members and their cherished items, including participating in regular no-cost conservation clinics at the Winterthur Museum and treating collections of badly damaged photographs salvaged from disasters. In 2015 and 2016, Art Conservation students helped to stabilize and conserve fire- and flood-damaged photographs—developing skills by working with real things that matter to their owners and their communities.

### **Infrastructure of Engagement**

Colleges and universities, scholarly societies, higher education organizations, and foundations have invested in a variety of programs and institutions to support engagement activities. *Humanities for All* includes these efforts under the category of Infrastructure of Engagement. This infrastructure can involve:

- Funding for faculty- and student-engaged research, teaching, and programming;
- Recognition of engagement in policies for tenure and promotion;
- Faculty and graduate student training programs (institutes, certificates, degrees);
- Centers dedicated to engaged research, teaching, and programming;
- Event series, including lectures and other engaged public programs; and
- Conferences and consortia supporting publicly engaged scholarship;

Infrastructure can support engagement for both faculty and graduate students.

For example, a \$5,000 competitive fellowship for faculty from the Center for the Humanities at the University of New Hampshire (UNH) supports work that “emphasizes sustained collaboration and partnership with community organizations, mutual respect among academic and community partners, and the recognition that knowledge and expertise are not the exclusive purview of academic practitioners.” Eleanor Harrison-Buck received such an award and was later nominated by the director of the Center for the Humanities at UNH for a Whiting Public Engagement Fellowship. The Whiting Fellowship allowed her to expand on her work with Kriol communities in Belize and to develop a collaboration with Sara Clarke-Vivier, leading to the establishment of the Crooked Tree Museum and Cultural Heritage Center.

To support engaged graduate work, the University of Michigan Rackham Graduate School created the Rackham Program in Public Scholarship. Working with graduate students in all fields, the program offers a range of professional development resources, including a summer institute on public scholarship, a yearlong series of workshops on engaged teaching, and financial support for public scholarship in the form of grants and fellowships.

Scholarly societies also play key roles in creating infrastructure to support and incentivize engagement. To list a few examples on *Humanities for All*, the American Philosophical Association organized an annual public philosophy op-ed contest; the American Academy of Religion collaborates with the Religious Freedom Center of the Newseum Institute to lead the Public Scholars Project, supporting scholars of religion to communicate effectively and foster religious literacy; and the Society for Biblical Literature operates Bible Odyssey—a website where scholars present historical and literary research on the Bible for a broad audience.



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## Five Overlapping Types of Publicly Engaged Humanities Work

While examples of each of the five types of publicly engaged humanities work reviewed in this essay are represented on *Humanities for All*, more than one of these types are often present in a single project. By way of conclusion, it may be helpful to discuss a project that includes all five types discussed above: Baltimore Traces courses at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). These publicly engaged courses bring faculty, students, and community members together to create media and public programming on Baltimore's residents and changing neighborhoods.

Baltimore Traces courses represent an important engaged learning opportunity for UMBC students. The fall 2017 iteration of the course taught by faculty member Nicole King brought students to Baltimore's Lexington Market soon after the city announced a \$40 million plan to raze and redevelop the public market. King and her students worked with the market's community of customers, vendors, and management to communicate news about the redevelopment and to explore their responses. They researched the market's history and created media and programming to share with the market community, including two public history zines, a ten-minute podcast, and a public event at the end of the semester to share student research and celebrate the community's recognition of Lexington Market. In doing so, the course included all the types of engagement listed above. First and foremost, it represents an example of engaged teaching. It involved outreach, sharing information about the market through a range of media. It involved engaged public programming, creating a humanities experience through the end-of-semester public program. It involved engaged research, including oral history research that served as the driver of the class's work. The Baltimore Traces courses have been supported by a number of internal UMBC grants, which represent examples of the infrastructure of engagement.

For practitioners in higher education, Baltimore Traces represents a model that can inspire new or broader outreach and engaged public programming, research, and teaching. It also makes clear that institutional funding creates the infrastructure necessary to support public engagement.

For advocates, Baltimore Traces courses can help make the case for the potential impact of all five types of publicly engaged humanities work. Their engaged teaching shows how the humanities connect students with their communities and provide them with hands-on experiences. Their engaged research demonstrates that the humanities can play an essential role in preserving, understanding, and amplifying a community's stories. Their public programming and outreach efforts make clear that the humanities have a key role to play in facilitating dialogue around issues of public concern. Finally, UMBC's internal funding can serve as an example in advocating for similar infrastructure on other campuses.

*Humanities for All* works to capture the details of projects like Baltimore Traces and the voices of those involved. As Christina Kwegan, Baltimore Traces fellow and UMBC alumna, writes in a zine produced in the fall of 2017, "I am able to combine the love I have for my city with my passion to capture meaningful stories from the city's residents and visitors. This has opened up new doors for me and given me a different perspective on parts of the city I've known my whole life." Words like hers—and those of other students, project directors, and community members who have participated in publicly engaged humanities work—capture the multi-faceted benefits of these projects for all involved.

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## Goals of the Publicly Engaged Humanities

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Daniel Fisher-Livne, National Humanities Alliance



A visitor to the States of Incarceration exhibit listens to audio content that helps explore the local impacts of mass incarceration across the United States. Photograph by Chris Choi. Image courtesy of the Humanities Action Lab.

Across the United States, humanities faculty and students are extending the benefits of the humanities beyond the classroom by engaging diverse communities in their work. A project in Bowling Green, Kentucky, for example, is working with local Bosnian Americans to collect oral histories and artifacts and to create exhibitions that broaden understanding of their community's experience. A project on Standing Rock Reservation in North and South Dakota is working with the tribal community to document the endangered Dakota/Lakota language.

While each project has its own particular aims, as we have collected the over 1,500 initiatives in the *Humanities for All* database, we have found five overarching goals toward which nearly all of these projects work:

- Informing contemporary debates;
- Amplifying community voices and histories;
- Helping individuals and communities navigate difficult experiences;
- Expanding educational access; and
- Preserving culture in times of crisis and change.

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In providing descriptions of these overarching goals and examples of projects that fit into each one, this essay offers a broad view of what humanities scholars are aiming to contribute to public life. These broad categories also offer new avenues for research into the public value of the humanities. While the individual projects featured here have particular impacts—greater community understanding in Bowling Green or the preservation of Dakota/Lakota language for future generations, for example—we hope that these broad categories will serve as ways to link humanities work to broader policy conversations.

## 1. Informing Contemporary Debates

Publicly engaged humanities projects aim to inform contemporary debates on issues ranging from mass incarceration to environmental change to race and identity. Faculty and students bring together diverse community stakeholders, often in collaboration with community organizations, and use the humanities to start conversations. Humanities content and methodologies can productively reorient these conversations by contextualizing concerns, encouraging participants to question previous assumptions, and enriching both disciplinary and public knowledge through discussion.

The work of the Humanities Action Lab (HAL)—a Rutgers University-Newark-based coalition of universities and community organizations—showcases the importance of collaboration with local partners to bring diverse participants to the table and to use humanities content and methodologies to facilitate conversations across difference.

HAL's States of Incarceration project, for example, facilitates conversations on mass incarceration. The project connects students and scholars with individuals impacted by incarceration in 20 cities around the country to create a traveling exhibition, web platform, and series of public dialogues exploring the roots and possible futures of mass incarceration. Associate Director Margie Weinstein explains that the project embraces humanities approaches by “bringing historical perspective to contemporary concerns to examine how the past can inform the present and understand how we got here.” States of Incarceration is student- and community-driven in all 20 locations. DePaul University, for example, co-created their contribution with an Inside-Out class at Stateville Penitentiary in Crest Hill, Illinois. As the exhibition travels to HAL chapters, it continues to spark and nuance conversations about this pressing local, national, and global issue.

Florida Water Stories—a project of the University of Florida's Center for the Humanities and the Public Sphere (UF CHPS) and the Florida Humanities Council—is a key example of how different humanities disciplines can each enrich public discussion for people of all ages. The program brings together students and educators in two separate week-long residential summer programs on the Gainesville campus.

History helps participants in Florida Water Stories understand the roots of Florida's contemporary relationship with water, UF CHPS Associate Director Sophia Krzys Acord explains. Religious studies, meanwhile, helps participants understand the relationships between water and sacred space—in particular how different groups including Indigenous populations have valued water and conceived of the environment. Archaeology has proven to be an especially powerful way of approaching Florida's environmental history. “Archaeologists help us to see how the issues we're facing in Florida actually are not new,” Acord says. “People have been adapting to different kinds of climatic variations, different types of sea level rise, for millennia, and their lives provide valuable lessons that we could learn from in terms of living flexibly with water instead of trying to control it.” During their time on campus, teachers produce “action plans” to incorporate what they've learned into existing state-approved standards for use during the school year, broadening the conversation about environmental change for children—and their families—across Florida.

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To inform public debates, publicly engaged work can also draw on humanities scholarship to encourage participants to question previous assumptions about themselves and their opinions. The DNA Discussion Project, for example, opens up conversations about race and identity using commercially available DNA ancestry tests. In doing so, this work is informed by and contributes to academic research in communication concerning the perception and articulation of racial identity.

Led by Anita Foeman and Bessie Lawton of West Chester University, participants have their DNA analyzed and then come together to discuss the questions their results sometimes raise. The project begins with a pre-survey, in which facilitators ask participants what they expect and how they would define themselves racially.

When the results of the tests are shared, the group assembles to discuss the relationship between what they expected to find and what they found and to fill out a post-survey. Two types of conversations ensue, according to Foeman. The first concerns differences between expected and actual results of the DNA test. The second explores the test's potential impact. "How," Foeman asks, "does this then join you to people in unexpected or expected ways?" The conversation can be personal and can uncover things that can be uncomfortable. Discomfort is not necessarily bad, though. "If you can catch people off guard with their own story, then that's like rebooting the conversation around race," Foeman says. "Because if I don't even know what my story is, then maybe I should be a little more humble about trying to identify what box somebody else fits into."

## **2. Amplifying Community Voices and Histories**

Many publicly engaged humanities projects are rooted in an effort to highlight stories that are under-represented in a community's understanding of its past and present. These projects generally depend on robust collaborations to foster narratives and identify artifacts with community members. The projects then bring a higher profile to these stories through public programming that introduces the community members' diverse experiences and can even shift understandings of the wider community itself.

Behind the Big House, for example, works to enrich tours of antebellum houses in Holly Springs, Mississippi by incorporating the stories of enslaved people and their quarters. Behind the Big House was created in 2012 by Chelius Carter and Jenifer Eggleston of the Hugh Craft House, a historic house in Holly Springs. Jodi Skipper of the University of Mississippi began collaborating with Carter and Eggleston in the project's first year. "I was inspired to work collaboratively with them, in an effort to remedy the paucity of sites [where] slavery [is] visible on the Mississippi landscape," Skipper says.

Skipper has helped Carter and Eggleston highlight slave dwellings in a number of ways, including integrating Behind the Big House into University of Mississippi coursework in Southern studies and African diaspora studies by, for example, bringing students to Holly Springs to serve as docents. By bringing together students and community members, this work re-inscribes African American history into the region's landscape through its slave dwellings, addressing a fundamental gap in Southern public history.

Efforts to amplify more contemporary voices can build off different research methodologies but with similar goals. In Bowling Green, Kentucky, for example, Brent Björkman of Western Kentucky University is collaborating with local Bosnian Americans to showcase their traditional arts and culture. The project developed out of a chance encounter between Björkman and Denis Hodžić of the Bowling Green Bosnian American community. As the two spoke, they resolved to work together to help Hodžić's community tell its story through oral history research. In monthly meetings with partners from the university and the community, community members learned oral

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history methods and conducted interviews. As members of the Bosnian American community participated in the oral history project, they had the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and cultural traditions in Bosnia and Kentucky. In late September 2017, the community came together to open “A Culture Carried: Bosnians in Bowling Green” at Western Kentucky University’s Kentucky Museum. The exhibition shared the community’s rich and, at times, difficult history through their arrival in Bowling Green, broadening conceptions of what it means to be a Kentuckian.

In Newark, New Jersey, *Newest Americans* shares *A Culture Carried*’s goal of broadening perceptions of a community, executing its vision through an innovative public-private “multimedia collaboratory” led by Tim Raphael of Rutgers University-Newark, Julie Winokur of Talking Eyes Media, and Ed Kashi of VII Photo.

Working across humanities and arts disciplines, the project brings together faculty, students, journalists, media-makers, and artists to tell the stories of Newark’s residents and university students who are migrants and immigrants from all around the world living together in an urban metropolis. Through classes at Rutgers University-Newark and community events and collaborations, the project creates high-quality media to celebrate Newark as a global city in which, Raphael writes, “the newest Americans from all over the world are acquiring a college education and social mobility.” With this goal, the project involves students in fellowships and courses that research, identify, and communicate the city’s stories in the archives and in the community: what Raphael calls “activating the archives.”

### **3. Helping Individuals and Communities Navigate Difficult Experiences**

Humanities scholars and students are also engaged in a variety of efforts that use humanities pedagogies, methodologies, and content to support individuals and communities as they navigate difficult experiences. This approach has been used effectively in efforts to engage and support veterans. Another approach to supporting individuals and communities draws on the intercultural and language expertise developed through the humanities, often to connect with immigrant or refugee populations and offer them support in a variety of ways.

The efforts of English faculty from South Dakota State University are emblematic of programs for veterans that facilitate reflection and support veterans in sharing their experiences. SDSU’s Veterans’ Writing Workshop/Book Club engages veterans in creative writing and guided discussions of literature and films about war that help members of the armed forces community express themselves and explore their experiences. Undergraduate aviation major and student veteran Paul McKnelly recalls that a simple conversation about an essay “turned into a conversation about life. I really recognized it right away as therapeutic to everybody that was there. It could be used as a tool for checks and balances—hey, how are you doing; how’s life—it was a great experience for me.”

Other approaches to supporting individuals and communities in navigating difficult experiences involve service learning opportunities for students of world languages and cultures. At North Carolina State University, Spanish language and culture students partner with organizations that address the needs of the Hispanic community through *Voluntarios Ahora en Raleigh (VOLAR)*. This work is mutually beneficial. For the Hispanic community, the program offers organizational support. For NCSU students, the program offers opportunities to gain professional experience and exposure to Spanish language and culture.

The University of Texas at Austin’s Refugee Student Mentor Program, meanwhile, connects university students studying Middle Eastern languages, cultures, and histories with K–12 students who are refugees from the Middle East. Roughly 70 undergraduate and graduate students serve as mentors in Austin Independent School District



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(AISD) schools each year, supporting existing English as a Second Language programs for Arabic, Persian, Pashto, and Dari speaking students and their families.

Working in 16 AISD schools, UT-Austin volunteers typically mentor one to three students. Following an on-campus orientation focusing on regional dialects, cultures, and how to respond to some of the typical experiences of refugees, the UT-Austin students help in any way they can. “They go according to their schedule and meet with students as mentors and tutors. Sometimes they are in classes helping students to understand assignments,” Katie Aslan of the UT-Austin Center for Middle Eastern Studies says. “They are also a social support. Occasionally, they will have lunch with students. They’re just there as a friendly face, someone who understands their background and their culture. A lot of work is sitting with students and helping with specific assignments. But they also work with teachers. If a teacher has a particular task that they think their student might need help with, they might talk to one of the mentors and have them help out with that.” These experiences buttress UT-Austin students’ coursework in languages and cultures of the Middle East, exposing students to, for example, varieties of spoken Arabic and the kinds of interactions they would not get in the classroom or even by studying abroad.

#### **4. Expanding Educational Access**

A number of publicly engaged humanities projects work to broaden access to college-level humanities pedagogy, recognizing that the study of the humanities engenders lifelong benefits but is inaccessible to many. Several programs are modeled on Clemente Courses in the Humanities, which offer college-level humanities courses to people facing economic hardship. Faculty members at colleges and universities across the country tailor the Clemente model to meet particular local needs. Other projects make particular humanities disciplines more accessible to K–12 students: fields like ethics, philosophy, and anthropology are not available to the vast majority of pre-collegiate students, but access to these fields introduces them to new ways of thinking and opportunities for academic engagement. Efforts to broaden access are often designed for teachers. The University of Florida’s Florida Water Stories program discussed above helps K–14 teachers develop curricula that include religious studies, archeology, and anthropology. Other efforts involve direct engagement between scholars, college students, and K–12 students, either in the classroom or in extra-curricular activities.

The University of Notre Dame’s World Masterpieces Seminar at the South Bend Center for the Homeless is an example of a program modeled on the Clemente Course that works to address a particular community’s need. The South Bend Center program offers a version of Notre Dame’s undergraduate Great Books seminars. Focusing on the reading and discussion of great works of literature. The program creates learning opportunities for the Center’s residents to earn Notre Dame credit and to build community, self-confidence, and critical life skills that learning in the humanities endows. They are operated as interactive undergraduate seminars, a format that builds enthusiasm by encouraging residents to see themselves as students. Enrollment is open to all the Center’s homeless residents, with free on-site childcare available.

Co-founder of the program, Stephen Fallon explains that the project is driven by the conviction that the humanities create positive change. “We have a strong belief that humanities are important politically speaking. Not in terms of right or left, but in terms of enfranchising people to join the public conversation,” Fallon notes. “We believe that students who are empowered by reading classic texts will gain more of a voice and confidence to address issues in the public. We have found that students report growing in self-confidence and in the sense of belonging to a larger intellectual community.”



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Operating on a similar model, numerous projects provide incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals access to humanities educational opportunities. For incarcerated individuals, Columbia University's Justice-in-Education Initiative offers courses in local prisons. For formerly incarcerated individuals, Columbia also offers on-campus skills-intensive and humanities gateway courses. The cost of these courses is covered by the university. Those who complete the program are advised on ways to continue learning, at times through cost-free courses at Columbia.

The National High School Ethics Bowl, meanwhile, creates extra-curricular ethics learning opportunities for high school students who do not otherwise have access to the study of philosophy. The program, headquartered at the Parr Center for Ethics at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, brings high school students together to discuss complex ethical dilemmas after school and in regional and national competitions. In preparation for these competitions, participating high school students meet throughout the year with coaches from the community and local universities, colleges, and high schools to discuss cases produced at the Parr Center for Ethics. This programming broadens the traditional high school curriculum with the humanities, empowering students across the country to form and discuss positions on complex social problems.

## **5. Preserving Culture in Times of Crisis and Change**

In times of crisis and change, humanities faculty and students have partnered with community members to undertake scholarship that is both integral to their disciplines and preserves culture in the U.S. and around the world. This dynamic drives a range of projects listed above, including, for example, Western Kentucky University's work with the Bosnian-American community of Bowling Green or Jodi Skipper's support of Behind the Big House. Partnerships with communities can often enhance preservation efforts, building trust and resources and creating channels for ongoing engagement with cultural heritage including Native languages and at-risk archeological sites in conflict zones.

On the Standing Rock Reservation in North and South Dakota, Sitting Bull College is invigorating the endangered Dakota/Lakota language. In partnership with the last generation of fluent speakers, the Standing Rock Dakota/Lakota Language Project is creating original indigenous language resources by collecting traditional texts and recording conversations between Elders with the goal of inspiring new Dakota/Lakota learners. The project is led by Michael Moore, Mark Holman, and Elder and language instructor Gabe Black Moon, who see the project's preservation of Dakota/Lakota language and culture as more pressing than ever. "We're losing Native speakers at a very rapid rate," Moore says. "This project is creating and preserving the knowledge of the Elders—the way the Elders spoke, the idioms that they used, and so on—in order to provide a base for these younger people."

Consider also the Emmett Till Memory Project, led by Dave Tell of the University of Kansas and Patrick Weems of the Emmett Till Memorial Commission. Plaques marking the people, places, and events surrounding the murder of Emmett Till have been vandalized since their installation in 2007: sprayed with bullets, scraped of their words, and even uprooted and thrown in the nearby river. Mobilizing methodologies of historical, communication, and digital humanities research, the Emmett Till Memory Project creates digital memorials that cannot be defaced. These digital memorials are currently available through the Field Trip app. Phase two, which will help users grapple with the perspectives of different historical figures, is in development.

ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives also illustrate the potential impact of the publicly engaged humanities during periods of crisis, in this case in anthropology. Working in the conflict zones of Syria, Northern Iraq, and Libya, the

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initiatives document, protect, and promote global awareness of at-risk cultural property including museums, libraries, and archaeological, historic, and religious sites. ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives work with stakeholders in the Middle East to protect all cultural property from both accidental and deliberate destruction as the region remains engulfed in conflict. The project team understands the protection of cultural heritage to be a matter of crucial importance, Principal Investigator Michael Danti explains. “We see what we’re doing as a highly integrated and inextricable part of a larger humanitarian effort,” Danti says. “We see access to cultural heritage and cultural expression as a fundamental human right that . . . has been deliberately attacked and/or suppressed through the course of this conflict.”

## Conclusions

Through publicly engaged research, teaching, preservation, and programming, humanities faculty and students are directing their expertise and resources to create positive change across the U.S. This mutually beneficial work aims to inform contemporary debates surrounding a range of pressing issues, amplify the voices and histories of new and long-standing American communities, support individuals and communities navigating difficult experiences, expand educational access for students in K–12 schools and beyond, and preserve cultural heritage in times of crisis and change.

The outcomes and impacts of the individual projects highlighted here are remarkable in their own right. They can be invoked as examples of what humanities faculty and students can offer particular communities and populations. They can also be invoked to shift perceptions of the humanities in contemporary higher ed institutions. They show that the benefits of the humanities in higher ed extend beyond the benefits conferred to individual students who study the humanities. Yes, humanities majors excel both personally and professionally; however, the humanities in higher ed institutions also aim to serve their broader communities every day and in times of crisis.

At the same time, we are hopeful that the overarching categories articulated here will move us toward more precise understandings of how the humanities enrich public life. To this end, this essay has worked to not only identify the goals animating the projects in *Humanities for All*, but also the humanities methodologies that scholars and students employ when working to achieve those goals. By articulating what the scholars themselves aim to accomplish and linking their work to these broader categories, we hope to articulate pathways for describing and documenting the impacts of humanities work. Further, we hope that these pathways will help connect this work to broader policy discussions. Better understanding the role of the publicly engaged humanities in providing educational access, for example, can intersect with broader debates in educational policy and even criminal justice reform. Similarly, the unique role of the humanities play in preserving culture in times of crisis and change makes clear that the humanities should be well-integrated into plans for disaster mitigation.

We look forward to identifying additional intersections and refining the categories here—and perhaps adding additional ones—as we continue to collect examples of publicly engaged work.

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## Partnership and Publicly Engaged Humanities Work

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Daniel Fisher-Livne, National Humanities Alliance



Putnam County resident Mrs. Georgia Benjamin Smith, speaks with Putnam County Charter School System students at the Uncle Remus Museum, Eatonton, GA in 2016. Image courtesy the Willson Center for Humanities and Arts.

Partnerships drive the publicly engaged humanities initiatives collected in the *Humanities for All* database. As a window into publicly engaged humanities work, this essay introduces four examples of public partnerships drawn from *Humanities for All*. These initiatives involve a wide variety of on- and off-campus partners, including colleges of education, research and public libraries, K–12 schools and school systems, community organizations and centers, and individual community members. In all cases, however, they draw on shared knowledge and resources to advance particular academic and public objectives.

For humanities faculty and students, these case studies offer windows into the origins and potential benefits of publicly engaged humanities work. In communities across the country, these partnerships have taken different paths and forms. Some originate in higher education institutions, with scholars proposing collaborations to community partners. Others originate in the communities themselves. Across these diverse contexts, these four partnerships have led to the creation of new humanities knowledge and benefits for partner organizations, students, and communities. They have broadened awareness and preservation of local history, working with and for local communities to tell their stories. They are creating new and more relevant K–12 resources, drawing on the expertise of educators at all levels. They are preserving cultural heritage, creating a more representative regional history, and training new community leaders. Their work challenges academic partners to share authority and responsibility for their work, a shift that can help to both address past inequalities and injustices and to create new broader, more inclusive humanities knowledge.

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## **An American Literary Landscape**

In Putnam County, Georgia, the University of Georgia's Willson Center for Humanities and Arts is partnering with the local K–12 school system to explore the region's history and literary heritage through its initiative, An American Literary Landscape. The writer Alice Walker was born and raised in Putnam County, and the project explores the world in which Walker grew up through the collection and exhibition of images depicting African American life in Putnam County. The images depict the people and places that made up the world of her grandparents, her parents, and her peers. By conducting and curating oral histories using these images as prompts, An American Literary Landscape is raising awareness of the region's rich literary and cultural heritage and establishing this heritage as an asset for its schools and the wider community. The initiative is a partnership between the Willson Center (with collaboration on campus from the UGA Libraries and the College of Education) and the Putnam County Charter School System, the Eatonton-Putnam County Historical Society, and Georgia Humanities. It has benefited from funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

An American Literary Landscape was proposed and is directed in partnership between UGA and school system staff, including Christopher Lawton and TJ Kopcha. Willson Center Executive Director Nicholas Allen explains, "The school system is the seedbed of everything. It is the community and the location, and it provides the students, teachers, parents, and fellow citizens who are engaged in the program, which has had a definable positive effect on many individuals." On-campus partners have also been crucial to An American Literary Landscape. "The College of Education has been powerful in creating structures that teachers can use in their classes for programs and assessment, in particular in shaping these practices to fit in with state requirements, and so not adding more work to an already deeply committed group," Allen explains.

An American Literary Landscape benefited partners in ways that were both expected and unexpected, according to Allen. Students in Putnam County have benefited from a rich and locally grounded humanities experience. Their school system benefited from the curriculum that grew out of this work, as well as the positive publicity and publication opportunities for staff members. On the benefits to the campus community, Allen notes: "[W]e benefited most from being part of a diverse and engaged public humanities project that taught us a lot about planning and alliances, and also gave us a local story to tell nationally, which has had other positive effects. And our Board of Friends really gets the project, and likes that it follows our larger mission, which is to engage all our citizens in humanities partnerships."

The work also built on—and offered perspective to—Allen's own scholarship, which is in the literature of Ireland. "I would say ... that the basis of that study prepared me to see the necessity, and the benefit, of engaging advanced thinking in literature and history in communities that desired a transformation in their self-perception," Allen notes. "This was one basis of the Irish revolution in cultural terms and the logic applies as much to rural Georgia as it did to rural Ireland, which is to say that the imagination applied to local problems can lead to unexpected opportunities for creative minds to reshape their circumstances, if only as a dream for the future. That dream has become an unfolding reality in this project, with who knows what consequences for the economy and the community in Putnam County for the future."

In the context of these shared benefits, Allen explains that building partnerships like this one challenges scholars to be cognizant of the legacy of past injustices. "It is a constant responsibility to be aware of this, to try and make as few missteps as possible (and some missteps perhaps are part of our own continuing education), and to attend persistently to the voices you speak with and listen to. This is all the more complicated within diverse institutional and community settings, which are themselves complex and shifting terrains."

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## **(Dis)placed Urban Histories**

In New York City, “(Dis)placed Urban Histories” courses at New York University bring faculty and students together with community organizations to document the city’s changing neighborhoods. In addition to conducting research in libraries and archives, students in faculty member Rebecca Amato’s courses collaborate with community partners as they create an online archive, a physical exhibition, and walking tours. “I usually frame it as a community-engaged teaching and learning opportunity,” Amato explains. “The idea is to use history, public history, or the humanities to engage the communities with whom we’re partnering in telling their own stories and then using those stories to build common purpose and advocate for themselves and their neighbors.”

“(Dis)placed Urban Histories” has been taught in partnership with two organizations that focus on housing and land use issues, first Southside United HDFC (“Los Sures”) and then Women’s Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDco). The two relationships have different origins, Amato notes. “In the case of Southside United HDFC, I’d heard that they had just opened up a museum space in one of the buildings they manage. This space was actually a basement storefront that they were calling ‘El Museo de Los Sures’ and they envisioned the space holding exhibitions about the history of the Latinx community in South Williamsburg. However, they were having difficulty finding people who could do this work, as well as staffing the space.” Amato saw this as an opportunity to help Los Sures realize its vision while providing a meaningful experience for her students. The project with WHEDco grew out of a conversation Amato had in the course of directing a fellowship program. As Amato discussed the possibility of placing a fellow with WHEDco, Kerry McLean, WHEDco’s vice president for community development, mentioned their ambitions for an oral history project. Amato noted, “I volunteered my class and the rest fell into place.”

In helping to set goals for their projects and determining their form, both Los Sures and WHEDCo played substantive roles in shaping the project and contributing to it. Both organizations helped identify candidates for oral history interviews. WHEDCo staff members also assisted with the logistics of the class and exhibition and sat in and talked to the (Dis)placed Urban Histories students. They were involved in all stages of the course, clarifying goals before and debriefing after each time Amato taught the course with WHEDCo.

In sharing leadership of this work, Amato stresses the importance of honoring community-based knowledge and expertise. “Working with a community partner is a process in which the scholar is not the expert, or even a researcher, so much as a student. The lessons I learn each time are really about humility. For one thing, what knowledge is and how it is kept is not always what scholars might consider legitimate. A photo album accompanied by its owner and its owner’s spoken description of the photos is a kind of knowledge-making and -keeping. Knowing which neighborhood gang you should join to secure housing for your young family in a dangerous neighborhood is another kind of knowledge. And how—or if—you record that knowledge decades later is more than an academic decision. So, ultimately, I benefited from being reminded that my knowledge is limited by a certain dominant perspective that is validated within a scholarly and, for lack of a better term, mainstream setting. But, for most people, knowledge is something very alive, very necessary for navigating everyday life, identity, and community ties. I stress all of the above in teaching.”

“[A] community partnership has to be built on mutual trust and a willingness on the part of a scholar to do the hard emotional work of not being in charge.”

This can require scholars to set personal professional goals to the side and to step back, Amato says. “[A] community partnership has to be built on mutual trust and a willingness on the part of a scholar to do the hard emotional work of not being in charge.” This might mean that the course of the project is different than initially



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imagined, Amato continues: “The goal is to change the stakes of what it means to be a scholar and to disassemble the walls between universities and the rest of the city. To use a popular term, I do this work to decolonize knowledge-making, knowledge-keeping, and the institutions that are responsible for setting the unequal terms of what these practices mean. As a cisgender, heterosexual, middle-class, white woman in the public humanities, I cannot make these partnerships all about me. If I do, I simply perpetuate a structure of power that has long existed and needs desperately to change.”

To ensure that the project would be mutually beneficial, Amato worked with the organizations to pre-determine the goals of the project. “For Los Sures, our collaboration allowed the organization to use the museum space they had constructed in a way that was consistent with their vision for it,” Amato noted. “For WHEDco, oral history was the whole point of the collaboration and that’s precisely what my students produced. More than that, WHEDco could see the value I saw in using interviews and humanities practices, such as archiving, exhibition, and historical research, to organize their current community. Having that shared vision early on meant that we were both served by the result. As for the students, I have heard only good things about how the course helped them understand urban planning policy and gentrification better, while also introducing them to some of the people whose lives are directly affected by affordable housing construction, urban renewal, rezoning, and displacement pressure.”

### **Southwest Virginia LGBTQ+ History Project**

In Southwest Virginia, Gregory Samantha Rosenthal of Roanoke College is helping to lead a grassroots community-based public history initiative to tell the stories of Roanoke’s LGBTQ+ individuals and organizations. The Southwest Virginia LGBTQ+ History Project’s primary partners are individual community members, the Roanoke Public Library, and the Roanoke Diversity Center, an LGBTQ+ community organization. The project, organized through democratic monthly community meetings held at the Roanoke Public Library, has produced a digital and physical archive, collected oral histories, and offered walking tours and public programs including recreations of LGBTQ+ social events from Roanoke’s past.

The project is community-led, Rosenthal says. “Since our very first meeting, we’ve invited people from the LGBTQ community to come out and they have set the agenda for what we work on,” Rosenthal notes. “We’re very focused on the ideal of democracy in doing this work and making sure that LGBTQ+ people are the leaders in this project and are taking the lead and are telling the stories about our community.”

There is also a broader reason for ensuring that community members take the lead. “Our project is about creating leaders and empowering leadership,” Rosenthal explains. “The goal here is to pass on skills. In fact, we have volunteers who are involved in accessioning archival collections, digitizing and putting in the metadata for digital collections, leading public walking tours, and conducting oral history interviews. These are all things I learned to do in graduate school studying public history, but they’re things we have trained young LGBTQ+ people in the community who are not affiliated with the university to do. It provides a sense of ownership over these stories. We feel that LGBTQ+ history is our community’s story and it’s on us as LGBTQ+ people to decide how we want to tell the story.”

While individual community members guide the project, the project’s organizational partners have played important roles. The Roanoke Diversity Center’s role in the project’s history was formative, Rosenthal explains: “The Roanoke Diversity Center, in fact, hosted the initial Roanoke LGBT History Project event that I facilitated in September 2015 at which the 18 people in attendance decided to found the Southwest Virginia LGBTQ+



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History Project.” The Roanoke Public Library has provided archival expertise and labor, hosted the oral history collections produced by the project, and has been the site for most of the project’s meetings.

The formation of these partnerships with the public library was an intentional process, Rosenthal explains. “The Virginia Room, which is a regional archive within the Roanoke Public Library, was very receptive to working with us. We arranged a tour of the archives for some of our LGBTQ+ elders so that they could see what it’s like before deciding on going with Roanoke Public Library for our needs. Once we decided to partner with Roanoke Public Library, they have been great about amending forms to fit our needs, such as allowing for chosen names, and for varied privacy options, for both donors and oral history narrators.”

The Roanoke Diversity Center has continued to play a key role in the project. Initially, the center served as the drop-off point for materials to be archived in the Virginia Room at the Roanoke Public Library. Though these materials now go directly to the library, Rosenthal says the center continues to play a key role. It hosts the Roanoke LGBT Memorial Library, a 3,000-volume community lending library the project helped to preserve and move into the center, and continues to help manage. The Roanoke Diversity Center also provides space for the project’s community outreach events and social media support.

Each partner has benefited in concrete ways as well, Rosenthal says: “The library had no LGBTQ archival or oral history collections before our project. We have helped the Roanoke Public Library expand its collections and thus serve a broader regional audience. We have also brought a lot of LGBTQ people into the library doors for meetings and archival work.” For the Roanoke Diversity Center, the project helps bring people to the community center. “Every event we plan and hold at the Roanoke Diversity Center helps add events to their calendar,” Rosenthal notes. “We bring diverse LGBTQ people into the Roanoke Diversity Center’s doors. We manage their library. ... We have provided a lot of volunteer hours to helping the Roanoke Diversity Center over the past four years. When the Roanoke Diversity Center was the sponsor of a summer camp for LGBTQ youth (which has now broken off to become its own organization), we also facilitated LGBTQ history workshops at the camp: one of our favorite programs!”

While Rosenthal emphasizes that the Southwest Virginia LGBTQ+ History Project is itself a community, rather than a university-based initiative, Roanoke College and Rosenthal’s academic work have benefited from the initiative. Roanoke College students have conducted oral histories and served as paid research assistants. The project has also shaped Rosenthal’s book project on the theory and practice of doing queer public history. “[S]o many of the chapters in my book look very carefully and critically at the politics and ethics of doing just this kind of community work,” Rosenthal notes.

### **Great World Texts in Wisconsin**

Great World Texts in Wisconsin is a project of the University of Wisconsin–Madison Center for the Humanities. In partnership with high school educators and on-campus units and curricular experts, the initiative brings literature from around the world to life in high school classrooms across the state. Focusing on different texts each year, UW–Madison scholars produce an educators’ guide and a series of on-campus programs for high school teachers and their classes. Through the adaptation and implementation of the year’s curriculum, new pedagogical and curricular engagements with literature are forged in classrooms statewide.

The project’s primary partners are the high school educators themselves, who are the engines of curricular creativity and innovation around the year’s text. In 2018–2019, the project partnered with 33 high schools.

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Schools have ranged from small rural charter schools to large urban Catholic schools. The program is dedicated to providing them with copies of the book and a curriculum that is useful to the teachers. The schools continually shape the program through innovative pedagogy. In implementing and adapting the Great World Texts curriculum in their individual classrooms, Aaron Fai, assistant director of public humanities at the UW–Madison Center for the Humanities, observes that teachers develop new curricular approaches to the study of literature. “We have been impressed over the last several years by Southern Door High School, who each year completes a group project involving the entire class—last year, in response to Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, they learned how to make beauty products from local, organic materials, and taught themselves the business skills to market and sell the finished products.”

The project also partners with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and on-campus units such as the University of Wisconsin Libraries. DPI has helped reach out to high school teachers and evaluate the curriculum since the inception of the program. Aaron Fai explains, “We invite DPI to each stage of the program (fall colloquium, spring student conference, and any planning meetings) and every several years, they help us evaluate the content of the program. Most recently in 2015, they helped us evaluate our curriculum against common core standards, and ensured that we were meeting statewide educational standards.” In the past, the partnership with the UW Libraries helped to purchase books for high schools and to collect and display rare materials relating to the year’s text for high school teachers, informing their teaching. Fai notes that this partnership is growing: “We now have a librarian liaison who will help with the selection of each text, as well as find us a regional librarian who will assist with the writing of our curricular guide for that year’s text.”

## Conclusions

The four examples highlighted here showcase the many ways publicly engaged humanities projects benefit both academic and community partners. (Dis)Placed Urban Histories in New York City is engaging both undergraduate students and community organizations focusing on housing and land use, informing practice with library, archival, and oral history research. An American Literary Landscape in Putnam County, Georgia, preserved and provided access to a critical period in Georgia’s literary cultural history while creating locally-grounded curricular innovations, positive publicity, and publishing opportunities for the Putnam County Charter School System. Madison’s Great World Texts in Wisconsin is helping the university serve its state by enriching literature curricula for its high school students in partnership with high school educators across the state. The Southwest Virginia LGBTQ+ History Project in Roanoke, Virginia is preserving culture, building community, and creating new resources and community spaces. It is clear that the directors of these projects value their partners, leading to processes and outcomes that recognize the contributions of all involved and that work to ensure that historical power imbalances are not reproduced.

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# Scholarly Societies and the Public Humanities

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National Humanities Alliance



Third grade students from South Loop Elementary School in Chicago visiting the Glessner House Museum, as part of the Society of Architectural Historians American Architecture and Landscape Field Trip Program, 2017. Photo by Michele Rudnick for Glessner House Museum.

Our *Humanities for All* initiative is dedicated to documenting the landscape of publicly engaged work in higher ed as well as learning about the infrastructure that supports that work—from public humanities training programs to national grant programs and campus-based centers. Scholarly societies are key players in the field. They both engage the public directly by drawing on the tools of their disciplines and provide essential support to scholars in carrying out and gaining recognition for their publicly engaged work. Building off a review of scholarly societies' activities and a set of follow-up focus groups, this essay offers a synthetic view of the work scholarly societies carry out in both categories. In offering examples of projects and initiatives that fall under these two types of work, we aim to provide a resource for scholarly societies so they can consider their own work in the context of their peers and for scholars to explore ways in which they can partner with and gain support from their own disciplinary societies.

## Engaging Public Audiences

Scholarly societies work to ensure that a wide range of publics, from lawmakers to K–12 students to community



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organizations, have the opportunity to engage with their discipline. At times, scholarly societies draw on knowledge generated in their academic discipline to weigh in on policy questions, inform public discussion, or enhance K–12 curricula. At others, scholarly societies develop mutually beneficial partnerships with community organizations and other partners beyond academia with the goal of co-creating curricula and research. Here we offer examples that fall into both categories.

With the goal of reaching policymakers, scholarly societies often harness disciplinary knowledge to take public stands on questions of contemporary law and policy. These efforts most commonly take the form of a policy statement or an amicus brief. In 2015, the American Sociological Association (ASA) filed an amicus brief with the Supreme Court in relation to its hearing of *Obergefell v. Hodges*, the landmark case that led to the national legalization of same-sex marriage. The ASA brief “highlights the social science consensus that children raised by same-sex parents fare just as well as children raised by different-sex parents.” Similarly, in October 2019, the American Historical Association (AHA) joined Seattle University’s Korematsu Center for Law and Equality, the Organization of American Historians (OAH), and several individual historians on an amicus brief supporting respondents in *Department of Homeland Security, et al. Petitioners v. Regents of the University of California, et al. Respondents*. The collaborative brief explains “the relationship between the history of anti-Mexican and Latinx racism and the use of related racist code words in the decision to rescind the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.” In September 2021, AHA and OAH became signatories to an amicus brief in the Supreme Court case *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*. This brief worked to provide a historical perspective as the Court considered the state of Mississippi’s challenge to a woman’s right to abortion, as protected by *Roe v. Wade*.

Scholarly societies also issue policy resolutions and public statements that demonstrate a constituent-wide stance on a particular event or piece of legislation. Many scholarly societies follow board-approved guidelines that target their efforts to areas where disciplinary knowledge can inform a debate or where a policy or situation directly affects the professional lives of its members. In response to the backlash against teaching about racism and related histories in K–12 classrooms, the American Studies Association published a Resolution on Defending Academic Freedom Against Attacks on “Critical Race Theory,” developed in solidarity with the #TruthBeTold campaign of the African American Policy Forum. These resolutions are also occasionally co-authored by a number of organizations, such as the Joint Statement on Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism issued by the American Association of University Professors, PEN America, the American Historical Association, and the Association of American Colleges & Universities. Usually, one organization with particular expertise in an area will take the lead and other organizations will sign onto the statement to show their support.

Scholarly societies also work to reach broad publics with their disciplinary knowledge to enrich public conversation about contemporary issues. The National Communication Association (NCA) produces a “Concepts in Communication” video series, which it circulates to media organizations to support their efforts to explain social phenomena such as microaggressions, digital anxiety, and navigating the proliferation of misleading news sources. The American Musicological Society (AMS) partners with the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame on a lecture series for the general public that highlights the work of musicologists that intersects with the collections of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame museum and archives. During the COVID-19 pandemic, societies have also produced virtual webinars and conversation series that have attracted a wide non-member audience, such as the Latin American Studies Association’s (LASA) Dialogues series on topics ranging from the Biden presidency’s effect on Latin America to racism and anti-racism in Brazil.

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Another key audience that scholarly societies have worked to engage in their disciplines is K–12 students. For disciplines without a presence in K–12 classrooms, scholarly society outreach can be the first introduction to the field for K–12 students. The Society for Ethnomusicology uses its annual meeting as an opportunity for scholars to visit schools in the meeting host cities and to hold a workshop for local K–12 teachers. In addition, it invites students from predominantly minority-serving high schools to the meeting for a “Day of Ethnomusicology,” which enables them to learn about career opportunities in the discipline. At the Society for Architectural Historians (SAH), donor-funded grants support K–12 engagement programs, including the American Architecture and Landscape Field Trip Program. SAH partners with other nonprofit organizations that offer design education, architectural history, and historic preservation programs to youth and docent-led tours of architecture, parks, gardens, neighborhoods, and town and city centers. Since receiving funding in 2014, the initiative has supported hundreds of architecture and landscape field trips for underserved students in grades 3 through high school.

In addition to sharing disciplinary knowledge with a range of public audiences, scholarly societies also build collaborative relationships with community organizations and other partners beyond academia where participating organizations and academics exchange resources and ideas. The American Academy of Religion, for example, assembled a task force of K–12 teachers through a partnership with the Religious Freedom Center at the Newseum to create a set of literacy guidelines for teaching religion. The fifty-page document, developed by the task force over a period of two years, addresses why teaching religion is important, the distinction between a devotional approach to religion and a non-devotional religious studies approach appropriate for public schools, as well as skills- and content-based approaches to teaching about religion.

In addition to enhancing pedagogy, partnerships of this sort have advanced research as well. Working in the conflict zones of Syria, Northern Iraq, and Libya, the American Schools of Overseas Research Cultural Heritage Initiatives (ASOR CHI) documents, protects, and promotes global awareness of at-risk cultural property, including museums, libraries, and archaeological, historic, and religious sites. ASOR CHI issues monthly reports to the U.S. Department of State, which are redacted and posted online. These reports outline the status of damage and threats to cultural heritage in conflict zones and are used by organizations such as UNESCO, Interpol, and Europol. Similarly, members of the American Folklore Society (AFS) have joined the Southwest Folklife Alliance in partnership with the Surdna Foundation, the Highlander Research and Education Center, and the Othering & Belonging Institute to facilitate Participatory Action Research (PAR) training for Black, Indigenous, and people of color researchers nationally and in the U.S./Mexico border corridor. PAR is a methodology that challenges the idea that academics or trained professionals are solely equipped to do research. Rather, PAR “recognizes that people whose lives are most affected by inequities, barriers, and problems already hold deep knowledge through their own lived experience.” By combining folklore and PAR research methods, the initiative celebrates everyday cultural expressions in the Greater Southwest while equipping participants with cultural documentation tools that lead to personal enrichment and social action.

One of the most visible public humanities initiatives carried out by a scholarly society has been the American Anthropological Association’s (AAA) museum exhibition “Race: Are We So Different?” Created in 2007 as part of AAA’s public education initiative, the traveling exhibition has reached over three million visitors on human biological variation and the history of race as social construction. Over time, it has grown to include an interactive website and K–12 educational materials. After the success of this initiative, AAA has created a second public education initiative on migration and displacement in collaboration with the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Culture Heritage and the American Library Association. Taking a case study approach to present stories of

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migration throughout human history, *World on the Move* includes a traveling exhibition, a podcast, and curricular resources.

### **Supporting Publicly Engaged Scholars and Scholarship**

In addition to engaging public audiences directly, scholarly societies have developed a variety of approaches to supporting their members in engaging with public audiences. Taken as a whole, these efforts encourage recognition of publicly engaged work in their field and give their members the tools to more fully engage with public audiences.

Several scholarly societies have leveraged their authority to promote recognition for publicly engaged work in the tenure and promotion process—thereby aligning professional incentives with their interest in pursuing publicly engaged projects. Through a collaboration, the AHA, the National Council on Public History (NCPH), and the OAH produced tenure and review guidelines for the evaluation of history professors. The ASA and the Modern Language Association (MLA) have also produced guidelines, with the MLA's resource placing emphasis on digital humanities scholarship. In a similar vein, the American Philosophical Association (APA) offers a statement on valuing public philosophy. The APA's statement was developed by two APA committees working on public philosophy and issues in the profession, and is offered as a subject-specific resource for faculty to use to advocate within their departments and institutions for the support of public humanities scholarship. Across these guidelines, societies urge universities and academic departments to create tenure and review guidelines that evaluate scholarship as a process rather than as a product. With an eye towards process, scholarship that engages in community-partnered work can be evaluated for its mutually beneficial impacts, with departments celebrating practitioners for their ability to address the evolving needs of local communities or the strength of their applied pedagogy. Not only does this shift help make visible the value added to scholarship from community-partnered research and teaching methods, but it also acknowledges the extra labor of service and administration that public humanities work requires.

Scholarly societies have also used prizes to foster recognition of publicly engaged work. Prizes offer individual scholars external validation (that can be added to a CV) while also raising the visibility of publicly engaged work in academia more generally. These awards include AHA's Herbert Feis Award, which recognizes distinguished contributions to public history, and its John Lewis Award for History and Social Justice, which recognizes leadership and sustained engagement at the intersection of historical work and social justice. In collaboration with *Places Journal*, in 2022 SAH will award its inaugural SAH | *Places* Prize on Race and the Built Environment, which honors public scholarship that reconsiders race and the history of the built environment through a contemporary lens.

In an effort to provide scholars with the tools that they need to engage broader audiences, meanwhile, several scholarly societies have trained scholars in translating their research into writing for public audiences and connected them with public writing opportunities. The AAA funds a cohort of members each year to participate in a day-long op-ed writing workshop organized by the OpEd Project, that connects participants with media mentors and teaches them how to pitch and write pieces for the media. With funding from the Mellon Foundation, the OAH similarly collaborates with the *Washington Post's* Made By History section to host webinars and in-person workshops to help historians produce public works. Topics range from how to write for public audiences to how to grow a social media base. As these gatherings are relatively inexpensive to produce and draw



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high interest from members, with modest investment OAH has been able to support the desire within their scholarly community to respond to current events and participate in public debates.

Other scholarly societies have engaged their memberships working beyond academia to support them in fostering rich engagements with public audiences. At the AFS, leadership noted that almost half of U.S. folklorists, including an increasing number of those based at universities, work in the public sector and engage with audiences through public programs. As a result, the Public Programs section of AFS provides a network for individuals and organizations working in public folklore. Section members gather around a shared interest in supporting traditional artists and creating educational materials and opportunities for the public about folk culture. Section activities include hosting awards for public folklore, annual publications, fundraisers for student and public grant support, and the maintenance of a directory of state and local public folklore organizations. The Renaissance Society of America, meanwhile, offers a grant program for high school teachers, museum docents, library curators, and directors of education at theater companies that awards \$1,000 for an exemplary online project related to renaissance studies involving primary source materials.

## **Conclusions**

Scholarly societies have created an essential infrastructure that provides support for their members to grapple with how their discipline can engage broader publics and carry out publicly engaged projects. Scholarly societies are also themselves practitioners of the public humanities, engaging partner organizations and communities in collaborative research and programming through their disciplines. While these categories don't encompass everything scholarly societies do to support engagement with the public, we hope that these categories provide a useful structure within which scholarly societies can conceptualize their own work. Finally, by highlighting examples of what scholarly societies themselves aim to accomplish and linking their work to these broader categories, we hope to demonstrate the invaluable role that scholarly societies play in nurturing, legitimizing, and proliferating publicly engaged humanities scholarship.

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 200 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. The NHA is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit association and is strictly nonpartisan. The National Humanities Alliance Foundation is the 501(c)(3) supporting foundation of the National Humanities Alliance. It works to research and communicate the value of the humanities to a range of audiences including elected officials and the general public. This resource is a product of the National Humanities Alliance Foundation's *Humanities for All* initiative, which is funded by the Mellon Foundation.



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