

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

It is my privilege to present to you the 2005 annual report of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

On September 29th, the NEH celebrated the 40th anniversary of its creation. In the legislation that established the Endowment, Congress declared that "Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens." For four decades, the NEH has fostered this wisdom and vision by helping our citizens explore what makes us human: the legacy of our past, the ideas and principles that motivate us, and the eternal questions that we still ponder.

I was proud to see the NEH carry on this vital mission in 2005 through our core programs and through the ongoing expansion of the *We the People* initiative. In its third year, *We the People* continued to help strengthen the teaching, study, and understanding of American history and culture. The initiative offered its second annual Bookshelf grants to one thousand libraries across the country, featuring books that encourage young readers to ponder the meaning of "Freedom." Fifteen Landmarks of American History summer workshops allowed more than 1,700 K-12 teachers to learn about significant American events at places where history was made—including Abraham Lincoln's home in Springfield, Illinois, and Alabama's civil rights landmarks. We also launched an additional Landmarks program this year for community college faculty.

In addition to inspiring discussion and reflection about our nation's heritage, *We the People* is also ensuring that the "first draft" of our history is widely available. In 2005 the NEH awarded the first grants in our new National Digital Newspaper Program, a long-term effort with the Library of Congress to develop an Internet-based, searchable database of some 30 million pages of historic U.S. newspapers now in the public domain. When the program is completed, students, teachers, scholars, and history buffs will be able to go to their computer and get immediate, unfiltered access to this amazing historical resource.

The NEH and the state humanities councils also played an important role in helping the people of the Gulf Coast save and recover their vibrant cultural heritage after the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Just days after the storms, the

NEH made available \$1 million for emergency grants to libraries, museums, colleges, universities, and other cultural and historical institutions in the region. These grants combined rigorous review with minimal bureaucracy, and within weeks targeted dollars were flowing directly to those who were recovering precious books, documents, and artifacts.

As the NEH worked to promote and preserve America's cultural heritage, we also expanded our efforts to help citizens understand the world beyond our shores. This year the NEH and the National Science Foundation awarded the first fellowships and grants in our new Documenting Endangered Languages partnership—a multiyear effort to preserve records of key languages around the globe before they become extinct. In May the NEH also announced a new agency-wide initiative, "Rediscovering Afghanistan." The initiative will promote research, education, and public programs about Afghan history and culture, and encourage American institutions to assist their Afghan peers in efforts to preserve and document cultural resources.

Through these and many other initiatives and grant programs, the NEH is bringing great ideas and the riches of our past to millions of Americans—helping them acquire the "wisdom and vision" demanded of a free and self-governing people.

BRUCE COLE

CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES