

“How can we model the behavior we seek to inspire?” An On-going Series

State Humanities Councils and Partnerships

"How can we model the behavior we seek to inspire? Do our boards, staff and volunteers reflect the diversity of the communities we serve? How can we be more inclusive?"

In the January 2013 newsletter, Federal/State Partnership announced that each issue of the newsletter through October would address issues raised by the theme of the November 2013 Federation of State Humanities Councils conference in Birmingham, Alabama. The primary source for these surveys is the contextual section of councils' self-assessment report. We will use examples from all 56 state and jurisdictional humanities councils in this series. This article first appeared in the June 2013 newsletter. Links to all the articles will be attached to the lead article to the series as they appear in the newsletter. Each will also be posted as a separate article in the Resource Library.

One of the ways councils expand their spheres of inclusion is through partnerships with public and private institutions and organizations. As David Tebaldi, executive director of Mass Humanities, notes, "A small organization with an ambitious statewide agenda needs friends."

Councils around the country work with colleges and universities, school districts, and social service agencies. The Hawai'i Council for the Humanities' Motherread/Fatheread program is the only family education program of the Hawai'i Paroling Authority and the Vermont Humanities Council's "Connections" program brings reading and discussion to underserved adults, some of whom are incarcerated. The Kansas Humanities Council and the Wichita-Sedgwick County Historical Museum have partnered to conduct 20 interviews with Boeing machinists, engineers, and office staff, as well as Wichita community members and city officials, on the eve of the plant's departure from the "Air Capital of the World." With its "Constitutionally Speaking" initiative, the New Hampshire Humanities Council is partnering with the New Hampshire Supreme Court Society, the University of New Hampshire School of Law, and the soon-to-be created New Hampshire Institute for Civic Education. One of the more unusual collaborations was that which Indiana Humanities had with the host committee for the 2012 Super Bowl. Its involvement achieved it mention in the *New York Times*.

WAMC-Northeast Public Radio produces a radio show, *Ideas Matter: Checking in with the Public Humanities* in collaboration with Mass Humanities, the New York Council for the Humanities, the Vermont Humanities Council, the New Hampshire Humanities Council, Connecticut Humanities, the Pennsylvania Humanities Council, and the New Jersey Council for the Humanities.

The Minnesota Humanities Center is part of a statewide consortium of agencies that includes the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, the Council on Black Minnesotans, the Chicano Latino Affairs Council, and the Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans.

With all their partnerships and collaborations, state humanities councils demonstrate the vitality and significance of the humanities to people and organizations that might not otherwise recognize how embedded the humanities indeed are in their lives and communities. Through their partnerships, state humanities councils vastly broaden the reach of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The examples in this article are only that. They serve to illuminate the universe of creative ways councils bore deep inside their states and communities to leverage friends, funds, and influence for the humanities. That these partnerships exist shows the power of councils to convince people of the importance and day-to-day relevance of the humanities.

- **Mass Humanities** furthers its core mission, engaging new audiences for the humanities, through collaborations and partnerships. Since 1998, it has received its state funding through the Massachusetts Cultural Council. It has ongoing relationships with four of the six University of Massachusetts campuses. Other partners include the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, Boston College, the American Antiquarian Society, Harvard Law School, the Massachusetts Center for the Book, and the National Park Service. Programs that benefit from these collaborations include the Clemente Course, the annual Massachusetts History Conference, *Family Adventures in Reading, Literature & Medicine*, and *Reading Frederick Douglass*.
- The **Missouri Humanities Council** does “nothing without partners,” according to executive director Geoff Giglierano. With the State Historical Society, it sponsors the speakers bureau and History Day. It hosts summer teacher workshops with the Mark Twain Boyhood Home and Museum. MHC holds creative writing workshops for veterans, presented with the Jefferson Barracks VA medical facility and Warriors Arts Alliance, and it partners with Warriors Arts and Southeast Missouri State University Press in the annual veterans’ writing competition and anthology, *Proud to Be*. It is a founding partner of the St. Louis Humanities Festival. MHC also partners with the arts council, state libraries, public broadcasting, and historic preservation.
- On its website, **Indiana Humanities** has a page devoted to its partners, listed by program. These partners include businesses, educational institutions, museums, community leadership groups, the Indiana State Library, the Farm Bureau, and the Indiana State Fair. It jointly sponsored the sell-out “Evening with Anthony Bourdain and Eric Ripert” with the Spirit and Place Festival. Two two-year initiatives, Food for Thought and The Spirit of Competition, have served as “big umbrellas” to engage a variety of organizations. The Spirit of Competition launched while Indianapolis was host to the Super Bowl and brought Indiana Humanities into the middle of those festivities.
- *Partnerships and Collaboration* is one of the **Hawai‘i Council for the Humanities’** major strategic goals and it facilitates up to twenty such efforts annually through its dedicated partnerships program. Many of these programs reach statewide and several are becoming on-going projects. HCH’s public visibility has markedly increased because it is seen as being part of the programs rather than merely one of the funders. Partnerships have also greatly enhanced its networking capacity within the public humanities and educational communities. A long-standing major partnership is with the Hawai‘i Book and Music Festival where HCH hosts a pavilion. It also partners with the Hawai‘i International Film Festival and with Hawai‘i Public Broadcasting.
- The **Virginia Foundation for the Humanities** partners with all major state cultural entities including the Library of Virginia, the Virginia Historical Society, the eleven Virginia Indian tribes, the Virginia Association of Museums, the State Council of Higher Education, and public and private colleges and universities. It works with such state departments as Education, Historic Resources, Social Services, Natural Resources, the Office of the Governor, the General Assembly, the MLK, Jr. Memorial Commission, the Tourism Corporation, and the Commission for the Arts. Partners include all NPR and PBS stations and corporate media. A nonprofit, VFH is a University of Virginia center. Virginia Africana is one of several consortia VFH has initiated.
- The **Idaho Humanities Council** has mutually beneficial partnerships with several state agencies, the longest standing being with the Commission for Libraries for the “Let’s Talk About It” program. In return for IHC’s support of the statewide broadcast of *American Experience* and *American Masters* on Idaho Public Television, it receives underwriting credits before and after each program and free promotion of its sponsored public events. IPTV has made IHC a free promotional video. A collaboration with the Idaho Historical Society supports teacher workshops and a traveling exhibit program. IHC, the State Historical Society, and the Idaho Heritage Trust sponsor an annual award to a small museum for outstanding interpretation of local history.

- The **Arkansas Humanities Council**'s partnership with the Central Arkansas Library System provides it office space in the Arkansas Studies Institute, a community that includes the Butler Center Archives, the University of Arkansas at Little Rock archives and public history program, the Clinton School of Public Service, and the *Oxford American* literary magazine. It manages the Education Minigrant program for the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, and administers both the Arkansas Heritage Grant and the Small Museum Grant programs for the Department of Arkansas Heritage. The Clinton Presidential Library is a welcome new partner, hosting teacher workshops and public events as well as participating in special grant initiatives.