Welcome.

Thank you all for coming to celebrate the launch of the new NEH website.

Nearly a quarter of a century ago, NEH began to experiment with the World Wide Web. A couple of young program officers who had put up personal sites were extensively consulted—they were they endowment experts. Primitive bulletin-board type sites were extensively discussed, but it wasn't until 1995 that NEH got its first website. That launched a series. At the time, a major goal was to make announcements and especially post grant guidelines so that applicants didn't have to wait for paper copies to arrive in the mail. One partial version was called "Gopher" after the University of Minnesota mascot. Another was housed on a Unix server offsite, and every configuration change required the help of an outside site manager.

After awhile, Amy Lifson, then a new writer/editor in the publications department, was asked to build a version. Eventually two web firms were hired, one after another, to design a new site. One of them was owned by a brilliant avant garde musician who loved to discuss his homemade instruments rather than strictly focusing on his day job. Finally, Meredith Hindley was asked to rebuild *neh.gov* from scratch. Her job was to set up an interim web presence until the endowment could hire a professional firm. That was 2001. Meredith's temporary site was the one we have been using for the past 11 years—a very very long time in the world of the Internet.

Meredith's website worked great when it was created, but the technology was soon outdated. Every posting and even minor correction required the services of someone who knew html —HyperText Markup Language. . Nothing moved fast. Everything was caught in the bottleneck of the communications department. Pictures were extremely time-consuming to put up, so we used very few. Video and audio were almost impossible to use. The system was error-prone because of the number of people who had a hand in each posting, and it became slow and inefficient. The content was often static for weeks. Sites that rarely change don't cast a very long shadow on Google. We were largely invisible on the Web unless people already knew about us.

Yesterday we launched a state-of-the-art government website, called as you might suspect, neh.gov. That is only the public face. It is driven by an integrated process that can be used for gathering, managing and publishing content directly from the source-- those most familiar with the work of this great endowment—the people run the divisions and programs. Our old site will exist as a backup for a few months. Then it will be permanently archived. The new *NEH.gov* uses a content management system called Drupal that is also used by the White House, the Energy Department , the Economist magazine, and Warner Brothers Records, among thousands of other users. It is adaptable technology that should not need to be rebuilt for several years because its look and feel can be altered and new features added without changing the fundamental site design.

This new website is highly automated. Pictures can be scaled to fit our available space automatically, or manually. Headlines, captions, and photo credits can be uploaded into templates and automatically slotted into the appropriate places on the site. Users who can't tell html code from the Finnish language can now post content as easily as if they were signed on to Microsoft Word. Experienced division and program officers under the guidance of their directors can now post information on featured projects, grant news, and staff in the field without waiting in a queue for action from the communications department. The communications staff will provide oversight and guidance and monitor everything that goes up on the site, but the days of the public affairs office being an obstacle should be gone.

The new *NEH.gov* is the result of a collaboration. It started when Talana Morton Smith helped us do a Sharepoint survey of what people wanted from the site. We then consulted with a web board, ably led by David Skinner, that was made up of representatives of almost every division and program to advise on what they needed on the site. We tried to consult with every part of the agency from the Inspector General to the Grants Management staff. We conducted individual and group training sessions. Paula Wasley wrote a manual for posting guidelines.

We appreciate the help and support we have received from almost every person we have approached and we consider the site to be proof that a federal agency can work cooperatively solve joint problems.

Of course some people worked on the site more than others, and Mark Burr, our web developer, bore the brunt of both the planning and execution. The site was conceived and built entirely in house by Mark. He deserves our immense gratitude. This is not the first time we have tried to build a new website in the past decade, but it is the first time we have succeeded and it is a tribute to Mark.

He has been helped by Paula Wasley, who planned and created an entirely new section of the site, called Explore. This enables us to showcase the many films, programs, websites and apps that we have funded over the years but that we have never been able to properly promote.

Virginia Nguyen implemented the graphic designs for many of the pages and is largely responsible for the final look and feel of the site. At the same time she singlehandedly maintained the old site, posting all the guidelines in html. Andrea Heiss elevated our design process and ultimately is responsible for some of the most beautiful elements of the website. The awesome Joel Schwartz can now post guidelines entirely on his own, avoiding the need for constant fixes of problems inadvertently introduced by unfamiliar technicians. Susan Daisey and Steve Veneziani in grant management weighed in on technical issues. Meredith Hindley came up with most of the original ideas for the grants and grants management pages. She was and is an indefatigable idea-generator. A corps of content providers in the divisions and offices have worked steadily to populate the division and program pages with lively and informative material. We had invaluable help from Laura Conway, now at FEMA, and Curt Suplee, now at NIST. Could all of you who are here please stand so that we can give you a round of applause.

I have jotted down some talking points as we move through the site very rapidly. We are giving short shrift to sections that Mark worked on for months, but, hey, that is life in the fast lane. :

The new NEH website contains over 4,000 pages and many new elements:

* A main “rotator” with five separate feature stories that will be updated frequently to highlight new projects..

*A interactive rotator for a completely new Explore section on which NEH can feature the websites and films it has funded

* A new, more webby section showcasing Humanities Magazine,

*Buttons for instant access to EDSITEment; Chronicling America and Bridging Cultures,

* A robust footer so that “contact us” and other important popular features are accessible on every page. The footer design is more than just a list, it is designed to allow quick and easy navigation of the site, in addition to providing an additional map for search engine visibility. That sounds like jargon, but it means that Google can find us more easily.

Walking through the site:

MAIN ROTATOR

The main rotator on the home page holds five stories at a time. One of them will almost always be from HUMANITIES Magazine, one from EDSITEment, and one from the state councils.

The Oyster Wars Story is an example of a story coming from the state humanities councils. In this case Maryland, which once instituted an oyster navy to protect its oyster indusrry.

The biographical sketch of Philip Lampi, the nation’s greatest expert on the election returns from American political campaigns of 1789-1825 was awarded the first Chairman’s commendation for his leadership in the humanities.

The Civil War story is a purpose-written feature about an array of Civil war related events funded by NEH now and in the past.

The Captured by Pirates posting is a story by Jane Aikin about new translation of a book about Algiers in the 1500s.

The Sor Juana story is a feature about a lesson offered on the EDSITEment website.

EXPLORE

The Explore section is completely new.

Paula Wasley curated roughly 200 examples of films, websites,apps and exhibitions that can be downloaded for viewing. This section allows the NEH to showcase its humanities projects.

The Perseus Library is the leading source of documents in the classics.

NEH has funded many more than 200 projects that could easily meet the definition of a Explore story. However, the web technology has changed so fast in the last few years that the web technology behind many laudable projects is technically outmoded.

NEWS

Recent press releases and news. We have all 320 press releases back through 1997, We have 250 stories about NEH that appeared in the press since 2010. And we have a large number of general fact sheets about the NEH and a comprehensive fact sheet of projects for every state.

HUMANITIES MAGAZINE

A more dynamic and accessible presentation of the excellent humanities content in Humanities Magazine.

Prominent button takes user directly to the place to subscribe.

It contains all the stories back through 2008 and counting.

Moving to the buttons across the header at the top:

About us tells the administrative story of NEH

There is an organization chart, chairman's office section, with recent speeches on the right and an iitinerary of the Civility Tour, national humanities council, state humanities councils, awards and prizes, history, and a vast amount of administrative, budget, legal and human resources information about the endowment.

Skipping over **grants**, because that is an intricate and carefully developed section that requires Mark to explain,

We go to **Divisions and Programs**. This information has all been created and posted within the divisions and programs themselves. Although the templates are similar, each has a look and feel of its own.

We didn't think we had time to go through every division and program's section in this brief presentation, so I have picked one at random, Preservation and Access.

Across the top of each division and program home page is a large, and in this case beautiful, picture illustrating one of their featured projects.

Along the side are buttons for the principal items in every division and program section

They are

About the division—what they do

Staff News

Featured Projects

Grant News

In the Field

And a resource library.

ODH has a huge and very impressive resource library

And for **Fed State** partnership, almost every section is large, full of content, and painstakingly entered and presented.

Every single site is worth looking at—each one has interesting stories that are fresh and make the case that the endowment is doing extraordinary work.

But now in the interest of time, we must go to the centerpiece of the whole website **GRANTS**

Mark , your turn.