



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE  
**Humanities**

## Overview

NEH supports research, education, preservation, and public programs in the humanities by funding top-rated competitive, peer-reviewed proposals examined by panels of independent, external reviewers. At an annual cost of about 50 cents per capita, NEH brings high-quality historical and cultural experiences to large and diverse audiences in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and five territories.

### **WHAT DO WE DO?**

NEH is about the democratization of ideas, providing broad and equal access to advances in knowledge and to the nation's rich cultural heritage. In 2010 alone, NEH-supported state humanities councils put on 17,700 reading and discussion programs, 5,700 literacy programs, 5,800 speakers bureau presentations, 5,800 conferences, 2,300 Chautauqua events, 7,120 media programs, and 7,600 technology, preservation, and local history events. The 56 councils also sponsored 4,600 exhibitions.

### **WHAT ROLE DO WE PLAY IN THE AMERICAN QUALITY OF LIFE?**

Over the past 46 years, NEH has played an essential role in advancing the nation's understanding and appreciation of the humanities. With NEH support, scholars and cultural organizations have:

- Undertaken research leading to the publication of more than 7,000 books, 16 of which have won Pulitzer Prizes, including James McPherson's *Battle Cry of Freedom*, and 20 of which have received Bancroft prizes.
- Produced major reference works such as the highly acclaimed *Dictionary of American Regional English* and the authoritative *Autobiography of Mark Twain*.
- Supported archaeological excavations leading to the discovery of the original fort at Jamestown, the tomb of King Midas, and a lost language of the North coast of Peru.
- Edited and begun to digitize the papers of George Washington, Dwight Eisenhower, and nine other presidents, as well as eminent figures including Mark Twain, Thomas Edison, Martin Luther King, Jr., George Marshall, Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, Albert Einstein and Jonas Salk.
- Mounted major exhibitions that have traveled the country, including the blockbuster *Treasures of Tutankhamen* seen by five million people and the recent *Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul*.

- Digitized millions of newspaper pages from the earliest days of the republic, thereby preserving and making accessible to the public the “first rough draft” of history. *Chronicling America*, a partnership between NEH and the Library of Congress, is digitizing millions of pages taken from newspapers dating back to the early Republic, making it possible to search the pages online – for any word or phrase – at no charge.
- Trained 95,598 teachers and professors on topics such as Congress and American History and Shakespeare in the Classroom. NEH-supported seminars, institutes, and workshops give teachers the opportunity to refresh and deepen their knowledge about the humanities through intense study. In the past three years, more than 2,600 college professors and 7,000 high-school teachers have participated in NEH-supported programs, to the benefit of more than one million students.
- Played a pivotal role in the creation of a new branch of scholarship, the digital humanities. These investments make it possible for scholars to analyze very large numbers of documents and materials from diverse sources and disciplines.
- Supported films, grounded in scholarly research, that bring history alive. For example, twenty million Americans watched Ken Burns’ seven-part *The War* (2007), and teachers made extensive use of *The Buddha* (2010). NEH also funds hundreds of exhibitions that make the wonders of our own culture and heritage – and those of others as well – accessible to the American public. Traveling shows such as *Lincoln: the Constitution, and the Civil War* have reached hundreds of museums across the country.
- Generated more than \$1.66 billion in support for the humanities through NEH’s challenge grants, which require recipients to raise \$3 or \$4 in outside funds for every federal dollar they receive.

## HISTORY and MISSION

The Endowment was created by the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965 following recommendations by the National Commission on the Humanities. The humanities have everything to do with the human condition, understanding human nature and human problems.

From an academic perspective, as NEH’s enabling legislation makes clear, “An advanced civilization must not limit its efforts to science and technology alone, but must give full value and support to the other great branches of scholarly and cultural activity in order to achieve a better understanding of the past, a better analysis of the present, and a better view of the future.”

Democracy, citizenship, and the humanities are inextricably linked. Especially in our increasingly pluralistic society, the humanities are essential to a shared understanding of what it means to be an American.

## WHAT ARE THE HUMANITIES?

As defined in the Arts and Humanities Act, the humanities include the study and interpretation of languages, literature, history, philosophy, comparative religion, the history and criticism of the arts, and related fields of study.