

CURRENT TRENDS IN HUMANITIES PROGRAMMING

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It is a pleasure to be here to discuss current trends in humanities programming in small, rural libraries. It is encouraging to see what libraries are doing and to see how they have changed over the years.

I have been involved in this process for over thirteen years and I feel that I have had an opportunity to see the growth of understanding between public libraries and the humanities program. I was privileged to be one of five people selected to go to Washington for the purpose of establishing a state-based council in Ohio. The group included the president of a private college, two deans of continuing education, the director of the State Historical Society, and a representative from the State Library.

I would like to review the NEH program with you and share with you some thoughts on how libraries, especially rural libraries, fit into the program. Both the divisions of Education Programs and Fellowships and Seminars exclude public libraries from the possibility of easy participation. The Division of Research Programs can provide libraries with some funding for programs. However, this is the exception rather than the rule.

Two divisions which do provide program funding for smaller public libraries include the Division of Public Programs and the Division of State Programs. Since Tom Phelps has covered the public programs, I would like to concentrate on the state-based

programs.

During the years that I have been involved in humanities programming, I have seen library programs improve from poor to outstanding as both librarians and humanities scholars learned more about one another and how to work together.

In order to trace the development of humanities programs in the library, I would like to examine the historical role of the public library. Through the years, public libraries have been thought of as the peoples' university and they have been in the forefront in helping to develop continuing education programs for adults. Public libraries have provided the leadership for the start of many community programs and discussion groups. Public libraries represented the real strength of the Great Books discussion groups.

Public libraries seemed to be a natural ally when the state programs for the humanities were established to provide support for humanities projects designed to reach the nation's diverse public. The state programs intended to bring together humanities scholars and members of the general public. In our first year of operation, we realized that the two logical institutions to start with (as far as programming was concerned) were the university and the public library.

Humanities scholars were eager to become involved in the program. However, during the first years that state-based programs were funded, the programs had to deal with a public policy issue. This created problems since many libraries were not equipped to

handle programming related to public policy issues. The program planning was cautious and awkward in the beginning since it had to involve both scholars and the general public.

In later years, as the NEH broadened the scope of the programs they funded and sponsored humanities programs that were not based on public policy issues, a larger variety of libraries became involved in humanities programming.

I want to discuss several aspects of program planning including the humanities fields which have been covered, formats which have been employed, and the size of grant awards. In reviewing the total number of grants awarded over a two year period by the State Humanities Councils, I encountered examples that reflect the variety of programs sponsored by small, rural libraries. I will not discuss metropolitan programs at the present time since they are not relevant to our discussion.

The variety of program topics demonstrates that small libraries are in touch with their communities. It is necessary know, especially in smaller communities, what will sell and what will not. At the same time, librarians and humanities scholars need to insure that the programs presented will provide opportunities for the participants to be involved throughout the program.

The State Humanities Councils have formulated a prescribed definition of what is included in the humanities. I would like to describe some programs that have been implemented.

One Alabama library sponsored a project that dealt with the areas of history, philosophy, and literature. A variety of programs

were offered within a ten month period. Humanities scholars addressed such issues as the interdependence of science, technology, and the humanities; and the impact of the humanities on planning for the future. Multi-media programs and radio programs were offered in addition to lectures. The project also utilized taped interviews.

The total project cost was \$105,000. Of this total, \$26,000 was a grant from the State Humanities Council. The local library contributed \$3,500 and also cost-sharing of approximately \$75,000 which included the value of the time contributed by all the people involved. Although this appeared to be a large grant, the actual cash portion represented only thirty percent of the cost.

Another library in Alabama presented a literature program on the works of William Faulkner. Numerous activities were scheduled in order to examine Faulkner's life, ideas, humor, and fiction. A play was designed to appeal to an audience with or without scholarly knowledge of the writer. The project also sponsored film programs and newspaper essays.

A third Alabama project covered the fields of archaeology, linguistics, and literature. This project, which focused on language and literature, sought to increase public awareness of the history and heritage of Alabama's Lower Creek Indians. Local archaeology digs were highlighted. This project utilized a conference/seminar/workshop format, along with a slide/tape presentation.

An Arkansas library developed a sociology project designed to provide information on aging as a creative process. The program featured exhibits, lectures, and films. The total cost of this

project was \$148. The cash grant to the library was \$33 with \$115 as in-kind contribution for time and use of facilities. The total impact on the community was greater than the \$148 expenditure.

While the fields within the humanities can be individually identified, projects can cover more than one discipline within the field. A library in Idaho sponsored a project that covered the fields of history and literature entitled "The Library, the Humanities, and the Community: Boise Public Library Plans for the Future." In line with the recently published public library mission statement, this project allowed the Boise Public Library to examine its role in the community and to assess the role of the humanities in library programming. This was accomplished by conducting a community survey, by holding a series of community meetings with target groups, and by holding a meeting open to members of the general public. The meetings were planned and conducted by an historian. This project used a research format and produced a printed document for follow-up workshops.

A library in Idaho presented a Great Books Foundation Training Program. This project extended the range of the Great Books Program by training new discussion leaders from all over the state. The instructor was an historian affiliated with the Great Books Foundation. The training sessions enabled discussion leaders to inaugurate Great Books Programs in their communities.

Another Idaho library sponsored an interdisciplinary project that included the fields of history and archaeology. This project

featured a humanist in residence. The humanist in residence worked primarily with the schools and libraries within the county. He identified primary and secondary county history resource materials and produced a directory which listed them. In addition, he held workshops in libraries to demonstrate how these resources could be used to teach local history.

An Indiana library designed an interdisciplinary project that combined the fields of literature and art. This project was sponsored in conjunction with Children's Book Week. The fourth grade students in Charlestown, Indiana, had the opportunity to talk with a local author of children's books. He discussed literature and the creative writing process. The children wrote short book reviews and printed them on the front flaps of book jackets they designed.

Many of the projects that libraries have developed are interdisciplinary in scope. I would like to emphasize that librarians need to know their communities, and know what would be of interest to their patrons.

A small Kansas library implemented a project on history and anthropology. Three films were shown that depicted and interpreted historical aspects of the westering experience. The films were based on anthropological, archaeological, folkloric, and historical sources. After the films were shown, scholars led discussions and related the films to Kansas.

A project in Louisiana entitled "Folk Public Performances in the Saint Tammany Parish Libraries" covered the fields of anthropology, history, and literature. Funds were provided for Saint

Tammany Parish Libraries to stage three Louisiana folktales using puppetry accompanied by a folk craft exhibition.

The use of local resource people for projects will ensure that a broad range of activities can be offered. A Minnesota library project entitled "Then and Now, Linking the Generations Through Reminiscence" combined archaeology, art, education, and library science. Participants representing different age groups compared and contrasted their life experiences focusing on customs, and cultural and environmental influences. Weekly meetings focused on reminiscence writing. Music and historical artifacts were used to stimulate recollection and discussion. Booklets containing samples of these reminiscences were circulated among libraries and schools in the area.

A North Carolina project, "Haywood County: Its Land and Traditions," used elements from the following fields: comparative religion, crafts and natural history, folklore, music and dance. These elements are recognized as components of the cultural heritage of this mountain region, and they embody many of the communal values which are of interest to humanists. The project sponsored demonstrations of traditional crafts and music and solicited comments from the audience concerning the significance of these cultural forms in the state. The discussions were complemented by scholarly dialogue and oral history interviewing.

A West Virginia library project entitled "Working Places of the Past in the Eastern Panhandle" surveyed historic industrial sites in the eastern panhandle section of the state. This project

featured exhibits, pamphlets on representative sites, a series of illustrated talks, discussions, and guided tours of key historic industrial sites. Both industrial archaeology and history were covered in this project.

What formats were used in programs that were sponsored by small, rural libraries? You have probably already identified some of the formats that were used just from the project descriptions. One format which is gaining popularity is that of oral history interviewing. A library in Georgia sponsored a history project which examined Grady County's Black community and documented it by collecting, preserving, and organizing photographs. The older citizens in the community were interviewed. The program featured a lecture, a seminar, and a field trip to the Black Archives at Florida A & M University. A variety of formats were employed including a conference workshop, oral history interviews, site interpretation, and a tour.

An Idaho library also sponsored an oral history project. The "Post Falls Historical Project" secured the services of several humanists who worked closely with the library in order to gather oral histories of Post Falls with the aim of enhancing the library's local history collection. The project also produced a self-guiding tour of the town's historical sites, buildings, and trails. The project included exhibit site preparation and tours as well as oral history interviewing.

A New Mexico library sponsored a project that dealt with art history and criticism and archaeology. This project was entitled

"The Search for Alexander." A panel discussion provided the audience with an understanding of and appreciation for the history and origins of hellenistic life and culture. The discussion also provided insight on the art and archaeology of the period and its impact on our own culture. The archaeologist's slidetalk helped the audience visualize problems encountered during the search for Alexander's tomb. The archaeologist's lecture also compared and contrasted that archaeological dig with digs in New Mexico.

Librarians can be very imaginative. A library director in Ohio found her project format so successful that she used the same program when she moved to a library in Pennsylvania. Her project featured live call-ins and public dialogue. This project, "Meet the Innovators," sponsored lunch hour phone discussions between local citizens and outstanding experts such as Dr. Benjamin Spock, Edwin Newman, Milton Friedman, and Abby Hoffman.

Librarians feel very strongly about the materials that are housed in their libraries. The Vermont libraries provided a packaged series project based upon audience discussion of different topics. This packaged series covered the fields of history and literature.

One successful book discussion series, "Crime and Culture in Detective Fiction," examined British and American samples of this genre from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's novels to present day works. This packaged project examined social attitudes about crime and the characterization of the detective and his milieu.

There is no one perfect way of doing things. A lot depends

upon the librarian's programming ideas, the resource people available, and the librarian's knowledge of his community.

You may be wondering how much programming costs, how much time is involved in planning, and whether your library can afford to sponsor a program. These programs range in cost from less than \$100 to over \$100,000. The grants from the State Humanities Councils are not overwhelming amounts. A lot depends on the amount of time you are willing to put into planning a program.

Some libraries are able to put more into programs than others. The Great Books Foundation Training Program in Idaho had a total cost of \$2,500; \$1,000 came from the Humanities Council, local contributions totaled \$1,200, and \$300 represented in-kind contributions.

Some libraries have Friends of the Library groups which assist them in providing local funds and some are able to work with other agencies. The humanist in residence program in Idaho which assisted the schools and public libraries is an example of this. The total cost for the project was \$30,000. The grant from the Idaho Council was \$14,500 with the libraries and the schools sharing a cost of \$7,000 along with \$8,000 worth of in-kind contributions.

The Charlestown, Indiana, Children's Book Week Project was implemented at a cost of \$800; \$400 of this came from a state grant, the other \$400 represented local in-kind contributions of time and facilities.

As you can see, it doesn't cost much to put on a good program. Most of the examples I have discussed were sponsored by individual

libraries, libraries that developed their projects locally with assistance from humanities scholars. Other libraries used prepackaged programs. A number of Kansas libraries participated in an American Short Story film series. These projects utilized a packaged program provided by the Kansas Council of the Humanities. The Council provided the films, viewer's guides, publicity materials, evaluation forms, books, and guides for the scholars who led discussions after the films were shown.

In conclusion, librarians can consult offices which develop programs on a statewide basis and implement one of these preplanned programs using local resources and people. Librarians can become active in planning community programs.

Are program planning and grant writing worthwhile activities? Librarians should be concerned with broadening the scope of their library's appeal. They should try to act as catalysts and bring together scholars and members of the public. This is the role of the public library, particularly the small rural library. I urge you to learn more about your State Humanities Councils, to meet with staff, and to find out how you can bring scholars and the citizens in your community together.