



# Where the Humanities Go to Work

To see where the humanities go to work  
in your state, visit [statehumanities.org](https://statehumanities.org)

WEST VIRGINIA HUMANITIES COUNCIL  
*History Alive! with Doug Wood*

Michael Keller

## Working Across the Country

The humanities deal with big, mind-expanding ideas. They challenge us to think about our world, our values, and our purpose as humans. These ideas are sometimes abstract, but they reach people in concrete places. That's because the state humanities councils have established deep roots across all fifty states, five territories, and the District of Columbia, working in more than **5,300 communities** and conducting programming in nearly every congressional district. State councils are experts at building local partnerships and work with more than **8,825 organizations** to engage people where they are, no matter if that is a barnyard or a backyard, a church or a community college.



**Thousands**  
of programs held across all  
U.S. states and territories

State councils create and facilitate programs tailored to their constituents and to the places those constituents live and work. You might not expect to find rich discussions of literature at a hospital, or see Smithsonian exhibits at a small town historical society, but those are some of the most popular and widely replicated humanities programs in the country. Those, along with hundreds of other programs for young adults, families, seniors, teachers, veterans, doctors—people of all walks of life—take place at small venues around the country, like local businesses and community centers.

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Locations like these form the bread and butter of state council programs in America, and they include sites like:

### Libraries

Since the mid-1980s, **Oklahoma Humanities** has organized “Let’s Talk About It, Oklahoma,” a reading and discussion program that encourages adults to explore the human experience through a deep and collaborative engagement with literature. Participants read four or five books over as many weeks and then meet with a humanities scholar who provides context, answers questions, and facilitates the discussion.



**VIRGINIA HUMANITIES**  
*With Good Reason and Encyclopedia Virginia*  
Peter Hedlund



**HUMANITIES NORTH DAKOTA**  
*GameChanger Ideas Festival*  
Max Patzner

## Hospitals, Including VA Hospitals

Literature & Medicine, a program created by the **Maine Humanities Council** in 1997, has brought thousands of healthcare professionals together to read and better understand their work, patients, and colleagues. Its success has been replicated in 26 states and at VA healthcare systems around the country.

## Small and Rural Museums

Since 1994, the Smithsonian Institution has partnered with the state humanities councils to carry out Museum on Main Street, a program that engages underserved rural communities with traveling exhibitions and educational programming to complement and expand existing cultural resources. To date, more than 1,400 communities across **48 states and Guam** have benefitted from the program.

## Houses of Worship, Senior Centers, and Community Centers

Humanities councils across the country organize and sponsor a bevy of thought-provoking speakers and theatrical “living history” performances, like Howard Coffin’s **Vermont’s Remarkable Sharpshooters and Gettysburg** at the Bennington Senior Center or Darrel Draper’s “Theodore Roosevelt: Rough Rider President” at St. Mary’s Parish Center in **Nebraska**, a state that booked a record 641 programs in 2017.

## Local Radio and Television Stations

State councils excel at making the humanities accessible and relatable to the individuals they serve, and one of the most effective means of doing so is through local media. Radio programs like WAMC’s “Ideas Matter” in **New York** or WYPR’s “Humanities Connection” in **Maryland** offer regular humanities updates, just as a bevy of documentaries, like **Arizona’s** “Metal Road,” give viewers a chance for prolonged engagement.

## Correctional Institutions

Motherread/Fatheread is a national literacy program focused on families that teaches child development and adult empowerment through shared reading lessons. Thirty-one states now host iterations of the program, including **Hawaii**, where it has expanded to include families at multiple correctional facilities. State councils further engage and educate prison populations throughout the country with reading and discussion programs, like **Mississippi’s** “Prison Writes Initiative,” **Montana’s** “Classics Behind Razor Wire,” and **Wyoming’s** “Pathways from Prison.”

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