



2019 SCHWARTZ PRIZE NOMINATION

One State / One Story: Frankenstein Indiana Humanities

OVERVIEW

Indiana Humanities is proud to nominate *One State / One Story: Frankenstein* for the 2019 Helen and Martin Schwartz Prize. This ambitious and comprehensive celebration of the 200th anniversary of Mary Shelley's novel, *Frankenstein*, grew to truly monstrous proportions in Indiana, sparking more than 600 individual programs that took place in more than 110 Indiana communities across 57 of Indiana's 92 counties, directly impacting at least 52,793 Hoosiers. Supported by a \$300,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, *One State / One Story: Frankenstein* was spearheaded by Indiana Humanities in partnership with the Indiana State Library and Indiana Center for the Book. The NEH investment was leveraged with more than \$225,000 in-kind and outright support by other funders and our partner organizations.

In characteristic Indiana Humanities fashion, *One State / One Story* generated intellectually rich and creative opportunities for Hoosiers to think, read and talk about the themes of Mary Shelley's masterpiece. Along the way, we picked up a few awards—a feature in *Tote Talk* magazine, of all things, for the design of our swag; and Pinnacle Awards from the Hoosier Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America for Frankenfest (Special Event 2018) and our monthly newsletter, Frankennews (Digital Communications 2019). In PBS's *The Great American Read* in 2018, Hoosiers voted *Frankenstein* 24th on a list of America's 100 "favorite books", compared to 43rd in the national ranking. Perhaps the surest sign of

success was a passing reference in a *New York Times* article about the 200th anniversary of *Frankenstein*: “The novel’s 200th anniversary has inspired a cavalcade of exhibitions, performances and events around the world, from Ingolstadt, the Bavarian home of Victor Frankenstein’s fictional lab, to the hell mouth of Indiana, which in a bid to become the epicenter of American Franken-frenzy, has held more than 600 events since January.”

So how does one become a hell mouth of Franken-frenzy? In the pages ahead, we explain how we broke the mold of what a statewide read can be and can accomplish.

PROJECT GOALS

While the statewide read model is not new to humanities councils, this type of program was new to Indiana Humanities. At the start of *One State / One Story: Frankenstein*, Indiana Humanities was one year in to a two-year thematic initiative, Quantum Leap, which explored the intersections of science, technology, engineering, math, medicine and the humanities. *Frankenstein* was the obvious choice for a Quantum Leap-themed statewide read: When it comes to asking the hard questions at the heart of scientific investigation, perhaps no book has ever topped *Frankenstein*. We also realized that the second year of Quantum Leap would coincide with the book’s 200th anniversary.

Our goals were to encourage Hoosiers to read, think and talk about the themes of Shelley’s masterpiece, reflecting on the role of technology in their lives, the possibilities for scientific progress and the responsibilities of creators. Along the way, we wanted to engage Indiana’s scholars and universities, build capacity for schools, libraries and other cultural organizations, and have a bit of fun engaging with an iconic text.

PROJECT FORMAT

We proposed nine distinct yet complementary program formats that used Shelley’s novel as a jumping off point for meaningful discussions about the ways scientific and technological changes are (re)shaping our lives and communities. Seven key questions guided Indiana Humanities and our program hosts through conversations about the novel:

1. *Frankenstein* complicates the idea of what it means to be human. What combination of biology, experience or innate characteristics make us who we are?
2. Under what conditions do advances in science and technology lead to advances in society--and how can history help us answer the question?
3. What responsibilities do creators and scientists have for the consequences, even unintended, of their inventions?
4. New developments in science and technology can blur the lines between human and machine, and natural and artificial, and can even shift humankind’s place in the universe. How should we navigate these changing, increasingly porous boundaries?
5. How do social categories based on class, gender, sexuality, race and disability affect people’s access to scientific knowledge and technological advances? Do some groups gain greater profit, or face greater risks, from scientific and technological change?
6. Is there an ethical context in which science should operate, and who should be responsible for determining the limits of science? If there are limits to science, does that mean there should also be limits to knowledge?
7. Why did Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* become an enduring work of fiction, inspiring thinkers, creators and scientists across generations? How is it relevant to people today?

Our goal was to offer a variety of ways for Hoosiers to engage with the text and its central themes, including events that would invite lots of people to spend a little time with the text (a read-a-thon, a scholar talk); activities that brought together people to talk about the book (community book discussions and campus programs); and programs, like the weekend retreat, that required deep, sustained engagement with the text and offered multiple opportunities to consider its implications.

The nine program formats included:

1) 63 Community Read Grants

Comprising the majority of the programming, Community Read grants provided 50 copies of the book, \$1,000 in program funds, fun swag, and training and support to libraries and schools throughout the state (other organizations participating included a women's prison, a retirement center, a writer's guild, a literacy organization and more). These grantees were required to host at least three programs, including at least one book discussion. Other events offered included speaker programs, STEM activities, film screenings and discussions and other inventive programs designed to encourage engagement with the novel.

2) *Frankenstein* Speakers Bureau

Indiana Humanities worked with Hoosier scholars to develop a catalog of 16 talks for a limited-time speakers bureau. The talks provided important literary, historic or philosophical contexts for the novel, and deepened readers' understanding of the legacy of the text. The talks ranged from the poetic and literary legacy of this seminal work of science fiction, to the history of science, medical ethics and justice, to the representations of women and mothers, to the interpretations of race and disability in the text. The speakers bureau enabled us to forge new connections with Indiana-based humanities scholars as well as for scholars to develop their public engagement skills.

3) Program Guide

We created a 59-page program guide (updated a few times over the life of the project) that included sample schedules and budgets, detailed evaluation instructions, essays by project scholars, suggested reading and viewing lists, and program ideas. This resource was freely available to anyone, anywhere (anecdotally, at least one librarian in Massachusetts used it), though it was designed to support Community Read hosts as they planned their local programs. Each of the project scholars contributed a short essay and discussion questions to help book discussion leaders and readers think about a key question raised by the novel, including the idea of motherhood, the concepts of destiny and justice, the context of race and slavery for Shelley's writing of the novel, the persistence of the science fiction genre and more.

4) Kick-off *Frankenstein* Read-a-thon

Perhaps our first clue that *One State / One Story: Frankenstein* had hit a nerve was the success of our very



Photos: Weekend Retreat readers, Frankenfest goers, book discussion participants and young creators.

first event, Frankenfest, a 12-hour read-a-thon and festival at the Indiana Medical History Museum. Nearly 600 people attended over the course of the event, which featured a continuous read-a-thon; a pop-up exhibit of rare anatomical books from the time of Mary Shelley curated by the Ruth Lilly Library at the IU School of Medicine; museum tours and curatorial talks on Frankenstein-related objects; hands-on art-making activities; and a live theatrical production of *Frankenstein*. A further 900 virtual attendees tuned into the livestream. Local politicians, new anchors and a WNBA player participated in the read-a-thon, as did performers, librarians, kids and parents, and Franken-fans of all stripes.

5) 9 “Frankenfest” Read-a-thon Grants

Frankenfest hosts received a stipend of \$1,000 to host a festival-style read-a-thon of the novel. In addition to the read-a-thon, hosts held complementary activities for different audiences on the themes of the novel. Hosts were required to attend a training workshop held in Indianapolis in January of 2018. During the workshop, host teams learned event-planning strategies, reporting requirements, evaluation methods and discussed the importance of the novel today. Hosts were given a program guide, planning worksheets, graphic design templates and a Frankenfest starter kit with materials to help promote the event.

6) Examining Ethics podcast

“Frankenstein and His Creation: Who’s the Real Monster?,” our podcast collaboration with *Examining Ethics*, produced at DePauw University’s Prindle Institute for Ethics, debuted on October 25, 2017. The episode explores the ethics of scientists and innovators working in isolation and features two of our project scholars, Dr. Jason Kelly and Dr. Monique Morgan. It was immediately a hit: It was the first EE podcast to generate more than 1,000 downloads on the day of its release, with 4,651 downloads through June 2019. This makes it one of EE’s most popular episodes to date and surpasses our anticipated audience of 1,200. EE reports downloads from across the U.S., as well as the U.K., Canada, Europe, and Australia. The episode can be downloaded or streamed here: <http://examiningethics.org/2017/10/23-frankenstein-creation-whos-real-monster/>

7) Weekend Retreat

During a snowy March weekend, more than 40 *Frankenstein* enthusiasts joined us for a deep dive into *Frankenstein* during the first-ever Weekend Retreat. During the retreat, participants took in talks from four Indiana scholars, had small group discussions, played trivia, and enjoyed themed meals and cocktails. It was the first time Indiana Humanities had experimented with this kind of sustained, retreat program modeled on Maine Humanities’ long-running Winter Weekend. Through fewer than expected attended the Weekend Retreat, it was among the most valuable experiences of the entire initiative; scholars heard from participants how their humanities research and teaching was important to ordinary Hoosiers off campus, while participants reflected that these kinds of learning experiences are rare and deeply meaningful (one attendee said that attending the Weekend Retreat was her reward to herself for completing chemotherapy).

8) 11 Campus Read Grants

Campus Read grants of \$5,000 were made to eleven Indiana colleges and universities to support courses and programming related to *Frankenstein*. The programming at these colleges ranged from course development around the novel, to exhibits, a publication, film screenings, theatrical productions, lectures, community youth programs and even a conference in Rome. Campus Read grants achieved the rare goal of getting universities to focus on the same content simultaneously, while also having on- and off-campus Hoosiers participating in the same program.

9) Novel Conversations Book Sets

We included additional Novel Conversations book kits of *Frankenstein* for our statewide book-lending library. Novel Conversations is a free book-set reservation service that provides books for book clubs in schools, libraries, prisons and more. We circulated two sets of *Frankenstein* books in 2018, which were frequently checked out.

COMMUNITY REACH & IMPACT

Our additional NEH funding allowed us to comprehensively evaluate every program offered as part of *One State / One Story: Frankenstein*. In terms of reach and impact, we know that at least **57,628 individuals attended programs in-person** during the life of the project. Additionally, our extensive communications efforts reached more than **17,599,748 in media and web traffic impressions**. However, these numbers only tell a part of the story. At all levels of engagement, from the individual to the organization, we saw lasting, transformative impacts from our participants, partners and grantees.

Individual scholars and participants demonstrated deep engagement and lasting impact as a result of their interactions with *One State / One Story: Frankenstein*. For example, months after the Weekend Retreat, 78% of respondents said they had been inspired to read more and 94% had talked with others about topics in the book or about Mary Shelley's life. Additionally, scholars involved in the speakers bureau reported deepened engagement with statewide audiences and were able to report first-hand on the impact these engagements had with their audiences:

[Adam Henze](#): "There are plenty of things to fear in a prison, but fear can be a fickle creature when discussing a shared love of reading. My intent in introducing *Frankenstein* in this space [a women's prison] is to encourage participants to consider how Mary Shelley uses 'the tremendous creature' as a metaphor for the ways a violent, neglectful society encourages violence and neglect in people. While representations in film and popular culture present the creature as a mindless, violent thug, Shelley's version of the creature is much different. Intelligent. Articulate. Lonely. Neglected. Misunderstood. Mistreated. Afraid."

[Cassandra Bausman](#): "Traveling the state, through toll-ways and cornfields, bringing the story into urban centers and small-towns, *Frankenstein* has never felt more rich, more vibrantly alive. In encountering communities all united together in collective celebration and exploration, watching thoughtful conversation between strangers flower about the meaning of a text, about the set of ideas it unleashes, I'm reminded how and why stories work, how and why literature remains such a powerful social force."

[Matthew Weedman](#): "Unpacking my equipment into the libraries of Indiana, meeting families and community members, and engaging in thoughtful conversations with strangers about the nature of creativity, electricity and wonder seems like magic in our own time as we increasingly interact online – a simulacrum of interaction and engagement."

[Jim Ansaldo](#): "I was impressed by how willing Indiana communities were to grapple with these complex and contradictory ideas. I was honored that so many members of various disability communities attended the presentations and lent their voices and authentic experiences to the conversations. And we had fun using improv—the art of making things up on the spot—to co-create new stories that featured people with disabilities who weren't the objects of horror, pity, or baseless hero worship."

In terms of organizations, nearly 70% of Community Read participants reported lasting impact, whether through partnerships or capacity building, as a result of this program. 89% of Frankenfest hosts said they were likely to host a similar or slightly smaller event. Several of the courses developed through Campus Read grants will be offered annually or biennially in the years ahead. About 80% of all hosts are inspired to continue organizing similar programming. Across the board, program hosts were blown away by the enthusiasm for this experiment. Our program partners learned that **audiences of all types are hungry for this type of programming, and that they shouldn't shy away from asking complex questions that stimulate audience thinking**. No matter the program format, the skills and ideas that participants gained have sustained long beyond the program period.



Teachers and community members participate in a staff discussion during as part of a Community Read partnership between a high school and public library.

As a council, we learned that a little money can go a long way with our partners throughout the state, and that their creativity and enthusiasm is unmatched. The most important example of this came from our Community Read hosts. Asked to organize three programs with a grant of \$1,000, most organizations planned many more—sometimes more than a dozen! Taken as a whole, we expected around 120 events to occur as a result of the Community Read opportunity. Instead the program hosts offered more than 400 programs during *One State / One Story: Frankenstein!*

PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION

One of the things we're most proud of at Indiana Humanities is the way our work generates buy-in from partners and opportunities to expand scope and reach through additional program and communications initiatives. We ourselves also enjoy riffing on a central idea and *Frankenstein* provided no shortage of inspiration. These efforts leveraged the NEH's generous grant even further and were part of how pushed beyond the basic model of a statewide read:

- The Harrison Center for the Arts added a *Frankenstein*-themed gallery (*MANmade: A Frankenstein Group Show*) to our existing Quantum Leap collaborative show, which debuted on February 2, 2018. More than a dozen artists read *Frankenstein* and participated in a discussion with project scholar Dr. Jason Kelly ahead of the show. More than 1,000 people visited the show. We received an additional \$5,000 grant from a local arts funder to underwrite this collaboration.
- After working with a digital humanist on another Quantum Leap program about gaming, we added a digital game design workshop, *Making (and Playing) Monsters: Learning Game Design with Frankenstein*, with Dr. Anastasia Salter of University of Central Florida. The sold-out workshop on February 9, 2018, included attendees from across the state.
- Adam Henze, a slam poet based at Indiana University who was included in the speakers bureau, created a video series of his performances of *Frankenstein*-themed poems. Poems include "Dear Dr. Frankenstein" by Jericho Brown, "Who Was Mary Shelley" by Lorine Niedecker, "Hum for the Bolt" by Jamaal May, "Prometheus" by Lord Byron and "Speeches for Dr. Frankenstein" by Margaret Atwood.
- We planned several of our signature INconversation events tied to *Frankenstein*. In April 2018 we looked at Indy native Kurt Vonnegut's enduring fascination with Shelley and her creation, using Vonnegut's short play *Fortitude* as a jumping off point with Marc Leeds, editor of *The Vonnegut Encyclopedia*, and Dr. Emily Beckman of IUPUI's Medical Humanities program. In October 2018, Victor LaValle, author of the *Destroyer* comics, which reimagines *Frankenstein* by way of Black Lives Matter, joined us for a program at the Indianapolis Public Library's Center for Black Culture and Literature. More than 120 people attended these two events.



Victor LaValle, author of the *Destroyer* comics which continue the *Frankenstein* story, in conversation with Professor Leah Milne at Indianapolis Public Library.

- In May 2018 we read *Frankenstein* as part of our monthly science book club, Books, Booze & Brains, in partnership with Central Indiana Science Outreach and March for Science-Indianapolis. Dr. Robert Pascuzzi of the IU School of Medicine's Neurology department was on hand to discuss how the book relates to theories of the mind and the history of neurology and psychology. Sixty people attended.
- We partnered with the Indianapolis Public Library on an ambitious slate of *Frankenstein*-themed programs in Fall 2018, including book discussions and scholar talks at branches across the system and hosting additional programs at the Central Library. Rebecca Skloot, author of *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, gave a talk in October 2018 as part of this series. 1,493 people attended *Frankenstein* programs through the Indianapolis Public Library.
- Several organizations, including regional literacy groups and library systems, planned their own *Frankenstein* programs without the formal support of a Community Read grant. We provided collateral, books (when able) and design templates funded by the NEH grant in support of these initiatives.
- In May 2018, we offered an "Electrifying Education: Teaching Science with *Frankenstein*" workshop for informal science educators in partnership with the Indiana State Museum. The workshop provided information and hands-on experience with the activities developed by Arizona State University and the National Informal Science Educators Network in the *Frankenstein* 200 Kit.
- Indiana Landmarks' annual Halloween celebration featured *Frankenstein* this year. As part of a *One State / One Story: Frankenstein* Campus Read grant, the music department at the University of Indianapolis developed an original score for Thomas Edison's *Frankenstein*, a short silent film produced in 1910. The original score was performed in accompaniment of the film during Indiana Landmarks' celebration.
- We worked with the Keats-Shelley Society of America to advise on its Frankenreads program, including providing sample planning documents, a case study and tips based on our Frankenfest read-a-thon last fall. Megan Telligman, our *Frankenstein* program manager, participated in the read-a-thon at the Library of Congress in October 2018.

FINANCIAL STRUCTURE & SUSTAINABILITY

One State / One Story: Frankenstein was made possible with a competitive \$300,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. While the grant allowed for the scale of programming offered in 2018, it also allowed Indiana Humanities to experiment with new program formats, many of which continue in 2020. *One State / One Story* will continue next year with a statewide read of Jean Thompson's *The Year We Left Home* as part of Indiana Humanities' INseparable thematic initiative exploring urban, suburban and rural dynamics. Several of the program formats piloted during *One State / One Story: Frankenstein* will continue, including Community Read and Campus Read grants, the speakers bureau, and the Weekend Retreat, while we'll choose other program formats, such as a multi-city tour with the author, that are appropriate to this book selection. Going forward, we will seek sponsorships, use our general operating grant from NEH and scale back the number and size of the Community Read and Campus Read grants to ensure we can continue to offer this program every other year or (we hope eventually) annually. We're fortunate that Megan Telligman, who was hired in a temporary position to manage *Frankenstein* programs thanks to the NEH grant, has accepted our offer to join our team permanently in order to manage and grow these many new programs!

WHAT'S NEXT

A lasting legacy of *One State / One Story* will be the relationships and partnerships that continue, even if the project at the center changes. Particularly strong relationships include the Indiana State Library, the Indianapolis Public Library and its Center for Black Literature and Culture, the Indiana University Arts & Humanities Institute, the Prindle Institute for Ethics at DePauw University and the Indiana Women's Prison.

Another thing, completely unforeseen, proved to be a game-changer, in large part due to the success of *One State / One Story*. In mid-2018, another funder, Glick Philanthropies, approached us with the opportunity to take over the Indiana

Authors Awards and to dramatically increase our literary arts programming. The funder had observed our monstrous success with *Frankenstein* and saw that we could accomplish ambitious and inviting humanities programs that touched Hoosiers across the state, whether in small towns, schools, big cities and communications:

“What we wanted was to have a much broader reach across the state to get more libraries...involved and thereby touching a lot more Hoosiers,” [said Marianne Glick of Glick Philanthropies]. What sold Glick Philanthropies on Indiana Humanities was the recent “One State / One Story: Frankenstein.” It comprised a constellation of programming related to the ethical, artistic and scientific questions of Mary Shelley’s famous novel, which turned 200 years old last year. The programs reverberated across the state [in] the way Glick wanted for the Indiana Authors Awards.”

--*Indianapolis Star*, 28 Aug. 2019

We are honored that Glick Philanthropies has made a commitment of \$1,000,000 over five years to support Indiana Humanities’ stewardship of the Indiana Authors Awards and expanded literary arts programming—and it wouldn’t have happened without the success of *One State / One Story*. Like the Creature itself, the project truly took on a life of its own! But our experience has been, unlike in the novel, that the unforeseen consequences have been pretty positive.

This project proved what kind of scale and how wide of a reach we can accomplish with the right mix of resources, partners, planning and staffing. Though completing it all was exhausting, we are incredibly proud that we were able to pull off such an ambitious scope of work and to engage so many communities (110+), partners (120+) and participants in person (57,628+) and through media (17,599,748+) in a consideration of Mary Shelley’s novel. Our board and other funders, inspired by what we accomplished through *One State / One Story*, have encouraged us to keep thinking ambitiously about our work and to push ourselves to surpass anyone’s expectations for what the humanities or a small humanities organization can achieve, in Indiana or anywhere. We were delighted that so many Hoosiers, from all walks of life, had meaningful engagements with the book and the enduring questions it raises.