Summary Notes of the How-To Sessions

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Franke Institute for the Humanities, University of Chicago
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Session #1 – How to be Heard Beyond the Academy

Facilitator: Michael Bérubé (Pennsylvania State University)
Moderator: Alison Cuddy (Chicago Public Radio)
Note Taker: Bonnie Gunzenhauser (Roosevelt University)

Session Notes

Michael Bérubé (MB) suggests that there’s been some change within academia in the last 20 years – a move toward somewhat greater openness toward accepting the ‘productivity’ of the public intellectual – still imperfect but more room for a variety of outputs/venues/forms.

Beyond academia, Heart of the Matter is a civic nationalist document that explains why the humanities are central to a healthy nation – might seem such a mission shouldn’t be controversial, but

- There’s a persistent discourse of decline about the humanities (e.g., recent David Brooks piece in NYT), which inevitably puts humanists on the defensive when they attempt to address nonacademic audiences.
- Humanities get public attention in terms of its monuments and artifacts – these fire the public imagination and bring attention to the humanities, but casting humanities purely in these terms positions them simply as a repository of received wisdom rather than as a practice capable of producing new knowledge or wisdom. We need a separate line of argument for why advanced research in the humanities is valuable, as opposed to simply reasserting the value of the monuments and artifacts that constitute our objects of study.

MB: Do the humanities have a potentially damaging internal discourse of exclusivity? (e.g., is there too much self-definition resting on working on objects of study that relatively few people read, too much identification with arcane knowledge as the central point of distinctiveness?). MB sees two possible reasons why we ourselves are so fond of the discourse of decline. One was offered by Bruce Robbins in his reply to Andrew Delbanco’s 1999 NYRB essay on the decline of the humanities: the discourse is that of the jeremiad, whereby we implicitly glorify ourselves in our self-abasement and claim (counterfactually) that we were once the most prominent disciplines in the university and deserve to regain that status if we can only reform ourselves. The other is that some humanists are fond of contrasting themselves with philistines—those mere engineers and business majors who don’t appreciate us sufficiently. Behind their complaints MB senses a secret pleasure in the fact that we are so widely misunderstood. The tipoff for MB was the Harry Potter backlash in which some critics complained that so many people were reading the same novel at the same time—as if reading should be a solitary activity confined to the very literate few. Likewise with Jonathan Franzen’s unease at being selected by Oprah’s reading club, and the defenses of Franzen who sneered at Oprah and at coffee-klatsch reading groups in general.

Alison Cuddy (AC): To get things out of the academy: who brings the message?

- MB suggests that the first step is to take humanities work to literate non-specialist publications (NYT, NY Review of Books, etc.) –
- After that, it’s incumbent on humanists to use the language of the targeted arena – be in dialogue with non-specialized discourses (e.g., public radio)

AC asks: does taking the humanities public require that we downplay the notion of “expert”?

- Lawrence Weschler: argues that a large amount of the humanities’ marginalization is self-inflicted – “Graduate education has been focused on creating a mandarin class that speaks its own language and looks down on people. . . .In fact the future of the
humanities is going to be teaching the humanities to people who are not silo-centered” – e.g., a humanist who can effectively teach engineering students etc.

- MB responds by suggesting that specialized knowledge isn’t necessarily a problem because to some extent this is the nature of academia and the nature of expertise – such specialization is not a bad thing in itself, but it can lead, he agrees, to LW’s other critique – i.e., looking down on those outside the specialized-knowledge zones. More specifically, no one expects to understand string theory or advanced cosmology in detail, even after Brian Greene has patiently explained it for laypeople. Everyone understands that there are realms of human knowledge accessible only to a few highly trained experts. So there is no problem with having a mandarin class that speaks its own language; that is one of the reasons universities exist. It is only a problem if the mandarins sneer at everybody else—whether it is about Harry Potter or postcolonial queer theory.

Audience member suggests that “Scientists take extraordinary care in preparing a presentation that people can understand” – use visuals, don’t just read papers – they tend to be more conscious of and more effective at talking to public audiences well/entertainingly/instructively. How can the humanities do better at making their specialized discoveries accessible and appealing to generalist audiences?

- Philosopher who writes for “The Stone” (NYT philosophy blog) suggests that engaging a popular audience often puts a new spin/generates entirely new reactions to philosophical problems, in much the same way that convincing more high-level scholars to teach intro courses to undergraduate students might generate fresh reactions that both broaden the base of ‘participants’ and simultaneously provide insights into more arcane issues of research.

- Another audience member (Julie Ellison, founder of Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life) suggests that focusing on the moment of speaking and presenting is insufficient – we need to also pay attention to how preparing to speak about an academic subject to an intelligent generalist population changes the organizational relationships the speaker cultivates, how what the speaker learns changes the speaker and the projects s/he undertakes – i.e., public speaking is a dialogic event that changes both the audience and the speaker and there’s room to think more about the dynamics of that.

Marianne Hirsch argues that it doesn’t help to perpetuate the argument that the humanities’ problem is self-inflicted. Audience member builds on this and suggests that often what appeals to the public is gender studies, queer theory, Af-Am literature, international studies – in part this may be a general search for complexity but also reflects a connection to identity-politics interests among the general public—“I didn’t know the humanities could reflect who I am.”

MB: “Public humanities” doesn’t exactly resonate with the broader community – almost always defaults to a common-reading experience – “it [public humanities] is a much more open and difficult question than public arts, because most of the public understands that the arts involve public performance or exhibition.”

- Leads to a discussion about the complexity of “public,” the fact that “we’re all members of about twenty different publics,” etc.

MB thinks humanities and sciences have recently had more to say to each other recently than have humanities and social sciences. “Interdisciplinary” is a buzzword but often the disciplines are pretty much overlapping – how to pull together really disparate areas of knowledge?
AC asks about “inter-organizational pursuits” – what kinds of collaborations between academia and cultural institutions might prove useful in moving the message beyond the academy?

Audience member offers a model for how we make the case for the centrality of the humanities:

1. Central argument shouldn’t be about canons, because canons are not in any danger; “they’re simply changing the way canons have always changed, and that’s fine.”
2. Central argument shouldn’t be that humanities allow us to communicate more effectively, and/or to be better citizens.
3. Central argument should be to argue that the humanities offer one of the very few places in society where a commitment to a not-fully-realist approach to understanding the world is at the core of the project. Humanities offer the capability to “theorize the realms of experience and perception that everyone outside the university is not in a position to theorize.” MB added to this by saying that he sometimes refers to our disciplines as “the departments of making things up,” and suggested that we might actually have something to say to people who study creativity.
   - Another audience member suggests that one thing that humanities have to offer the social sciences in particular is an understanding that language isn’t simply transparent.

MB follows up/agrees by describing “humanities as discourses about value— not only about what is valuable in a social and cultural sense, but what ‘value’ and ‘evaluation’ consist of.”

Elaine Hadley says that the most common refrain she hears as an external reviewer of English departments is that faculty “want more time to do research.” But she asks: “can we be all of us in every institution at every moment understanding ourselves as focused chiefly on our next article, especially when research suggests that every journal article in English is read an average of 2.3 times?”

- Makes clear that she’s not arguing against the value of humanities research, or for a class system in which only a few institutions have faculty who engage in research – but suggests that there’s a balance issue that may merit further consideration – e.g., is this kind of focus on publication (its quantity and its quality) a value system that positions our energies and our commitments effectively within the humanities? MB replied that this is a good reason to consider all forms of intellectual work in the humanities, not just monographs and journal articles.
Session #2 – How to Teach Public Humanities

Facilitator: Sara Guyer (University of Wisconsin at Madison)
Moderator: Rachel Havrelock (University of Illinois at Chicago)
Note Taker: Anna Souchuk (DePaul University)

Session Notes
Sara Guyer (SG) is in the process of building a PhD certificate in the Center for Humanities at UW-Madison. The question of how to teach the public humanities can be heard in two senses: how is it possible to teach the public humanities, that is how does one initiate such a program institutionally, how does one present and argue for a track in the public humanities, and what does one actually teach when one teaches public humanities?

Focusing on the first sense of the question, Sara reminds us that all institutions are different; University of Wisconsin, a Big Ten school in the Midwest, already offered several opportunities and cultural practices that made it easier for her to establish the program.

1. UW-Madison has a commitment to the “Wisconsin Idea,” the principle that the boundaries of the university are the boundaries of the state: the public is very much part of what the university does, in its medical centers, the School of Agriculture, and also in the humanities. Sara translated that ethos into something that would serve her project.

2. When she was establishing her program at UW-Madison, there were a number of departments and disciplines that were radically in flux (languages, International Studies, Comp. Lit., etc.), which opened up the opportunity to speak to the Associate Dean of the Graduate School, who was supportive of Sara’s program.

3. UW-Madison has a robust array of certificates already in place (Visual Culture, Environmental Studies) and a practice of PhD minors, so this program fit with institutional practices.

4. There were already supportive faculty in place to work in the program.

5. Over several years, the Center for the Humanities had built several successful public humanities programs, including the Public Humanities Exchange, which gives small awards to graduate students in the humanities who want to ‘translate’ their research into projects that engage audiences outside of the university. Fellows already participated in a workshop series, and the program had brought awareness of the public humanities to departments across the College.

Some obstacles that one might encounter when considering such a program:

1. The need to persuade faculty who have a resistance to public humanities as something anti-scholarly, a catch-all for the weakest students, etc. How do we undo the oppositions of theoretical-practical, academic-public, etc.?

2. The assumption that doing something “public” means watering or dumbing things down.

By maintaining a commitment to complexity, we can understand the public humanities as a new way to communicate complexity and create conditions in which humanists, and not just economists and journalists, can help shape public discourse. Humanists can get people to think about close reading, critical discourses, etc. and can be at the center of those conversations.
*What does one do when one teaches the Public Humanities?* UW-Madison came up with one model that builds on other programs including the Certificate in Public Scholarship that Kathleen Woodward has established at University of Washington and the ACLS (American Council of Learned Societies) Public Fellows program. It includes a core course and a capstone project.

Question from Rachel Havrelock (RH): How does one locate the necessary resources for such a program: internally, nationally, etc.?

SG: The program at UW-Madison was made possible largely due to the Mellon Foundation, which awarded the program a multi-faceted grant to support faculty and students.

At the core of this project is a Public Humanities Fellowship for graduate students. Because not all students will go on to teach in the academy, it behooves us to also think about the training model more broadly. UW offers funding for five fellows in the first year and six in the second year. Like the ACLS fellows, the UW fellows get hands-on experience and mentorship in a non-academic, non-teaching position. In 2013/14 these include the Madison Children’s Museum, NPR radio show “To the Best of Our Knowledge,” and the Central Branch of the Madison Public Library, where a student is running “The Bubbler,” a self-publishing project. Two other students are working at the Center for the Humanities to run a public humanities program called Great World Texts of Wisconsin, which works with high school teachers and students across the state, and builds a curriculum so that high school students can read a work that would otherwise be too difficult to teach in the classroom. This year they are reading Orhan Pamuk’s *Snow*. Next year the fellows will work at Wisconsin Public Television; the Wisconsin Humanities Council; the University of Wisconsin Foundation, etc.

The initial influx of funds has created new partnerships and transformed existing relationships between the University and other organizations in Madison. The plan is to rotate the fellowship sites, but through external support – including, for example the placement of an ACLS fellow at “To the Best of Our Knowledge” beginning in 2015, the program has also leveraged new support. They also receive support from Madison-based foundations and University-based competitions focused on public programming and outreach.

RH: What do you imagine the public has to give the humanities and vice versa? What does that relationship look like?

SG: When we looked into the community for opportunities to train our fellows, each institution was so excited to be able to work with a UW grad student and quickly imagined a project or program that the Fellow could bring into existence. Madison is set up for this, but maybe not every city/town/university is. We have enough cultural institutions, but not too many. For the students, it’s an opportunity to learn about how other kinds of institutions work. Many students are hungry for these opportunities and already work in the community, so the fellowships and other projects allow them to connect their two worlds.

RH: To what degree do humanists fail to be a part of public discourse, and to what degree do programs at UW transform that?

SG: In the Public Humanities core seminar, I ask students, ‘What skills do you need that you don’t have?’ We also ask faculty to come in and talk about what they’re doing: writing op-eds, museum installations, digital humanities, working with teens, etc. The discourse can be shaped through skills. The oppositions that have organized our thinking about the public need to be broken down or re-thought.
Q&A Session

Question: You’re at a large public university. How do we imagine this being different at small liberal arts school, private university, urban private university, etc.? Further, are there concerns about unleashing unskilled graduate students into some of these public institutions?

SG: Yes – it will be different at different universities, and the key is to work within the existing culture. Regarding “unskilled grad students” (many of whom turn out to have lots of skills about which we don’t know….) I started by looking at ACLS model for postdocs and researched what was done and what has worked. ACLS has a good structure for student check-in, mentorship, expectations, etc. UW has an intensive set of protocols of what’s required from each student in the program. Students applied to a particular position, brought a short list to the institution in question and then the institution interviewed the students. Students have skills we might not know about, they know how to do things we don’t know how to do ourselves.

Question: To what extent is the term “Humanities” a burden vs. a facilitator? Do the words “historian,” “philosopher,” etc. communicate a more defined set of skills than “humanist,” and does the word “humanist” challenge the field?

SG: This is a challenge that we’ve struggled with, especially in naming the Certificate program. Calling it a program in “Public Scholarship,” we might attract more students from the sciences and social sciences. However, we are not only – or even primarily – training in community-based research, which “public scholarship” may suggest, and so we decided to stick with “Public Humanities,” even if it can sound enigmatic. The hope is that those who say they are studying the sciences but want to work in science museums will make the connection to the humanities.

Question: How does the UW program work with undergrads vs. grads/faculty?

SG: UW public humanities programs do not at this stage focus on undergrads. That said, there’s increasing urgency for humanities centers to be involved in undergraduate education as enrollments in institutions decline. Undergrads across the university currently participate in a range of service learning programs, but these tend to be closer to volunteerism than exchange. The next step for undergrads would be to change the culture of service into one of exchange. As humanities enrollments decline, it may be that creating opportunities for undergrads to see how the humanities connect to a critical engagement with society will help draw students back. We see arguments about communication, critical thinking, etc., but these practices of public humanities give new evidence. It’s just a hunch, but I’m willing to speculate that the more public humanities work faculty do, the better enrollments will be.

Question: Some skills and short-term employment may results from these experiences in the UW program, but that isn’t the same as a tenure track career. What do we mean when we say we’re producing “employment opportunities?” Do you have any data regarding what students have gone on to do after their PhD and perhaps their first entry level job?

SG: No one has tracked the data, although that’s about to change as the Mellon Foundation, ACLS, and MLA are working with departments to collect it. There will be hard data in a few years. Regarding ACLS, some of the program graduates have been hired by the institutions that first took them on as post-docs, some of the government agencies have found means to keep people on, etc. We also know that grad students have always gotten jobs outside of academia, but we haven’t historically sought to prepare students for those jobs or make the connections between a humanities PhD and really anything other than an academic position – which may or may not turn out to be on the tenure-track.
Question: Is there any sense in trying to say that the Public Humanities activate social welfare (Shakespeare Prison Project, art therapy, etc.)? There’s a tradition of the humanities having a therapeutic effect. Is there a case or a way of saying that they promote a kind of welfare for a broad portion of the public?

SG: An ability to talk to more people will create more value for the humanities.

Question/comment: The real action has to be at the undergraduate level. We must take advantage of the culture shift in the way that undergraduates come to the university expecting that a lot of education will take place off-campus (internships, service learning, etc.). We have to bake ourselves into that cake. Social Sciences faculty have service ethos built into their careers. Humanities has to incorporate being off-campus as well as being in the library.

Question/comment: To what degree are Public and Digital Humanities interrelated programs? Can we integrate internships more fully into the curriculum? Sending students off campus means also having little to no involvement in their internships.

Discussion
What are people in the audience doing in their respective institutions? Can we still keep our traditional courses that we’ve always taught?

University of Chicago has a robust Humanities Core, regardless of student major. Active internship program there; 600 students complete internships outside of the university, coupled with an entry and exit paper which asks students to both speculate ahead of time and reflect post-internship about how their experience related to their broader humanistic and intellectual lessons.

Question: Is there a list or database with resources available?

SG has compiled a list of humanities programs – it can be found here: http://humanities.wisc.edu/public-projects/public-humanities-exchange/resources1/
Session #3 – How to Do Digital Humanities Right

Facilitator: Cathy N. Davidson (Duke University)
Moderator: Patrick Jagoda (University of Chicago)
Note Taker: Peter Mortensen (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)

Video available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HPhd9yE5WWk&list=UUM2nSBiVH_QQkaHfOmwkdttQ&feature=c4-overview

Introduction

In The Heart of the Matter (2013), the Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences emphasizes that “[e]ven in a digital age, the spoken and written word remains the most basic unit of our interactions, the very basis of our humanity” (23). From this premise, the Commission argues that colleges and universities must redouble their commitment to “develop digital media resources to increase access to a worldwide public, gifted teachers and scholars from all domains of study will experiment with these methods and explore their new powers” (35). But what directions should this development take? Who should be involved? What should they do? The answers are in the making, according to Cathy Davidson (Duke University) and Patrick Jagoda (University of Chicago), leaders of a workshop on “How to Do Digital Humanities Right” at the Chicago Humanities Summit. Both contend that a “maker spirit” pervades the best new work in the digital humanities, and that it would benefit the humanities, broadly conceived, to adopt this same spirit. Supporting this contention, Davidson (CD) and Jagoda (PJ) delivered brief papers: CD discussed historical trajectories that bear on challenges faced by academic humanities disciplines in the current moment; PJ detailed specific lab models and projects in which participants are collaborating to fashion a future for humanistic inquiry at colleges and universities—and beyond. They then engaged participants in an exercise that elicited many local examples of “doing digital humanities right.”

Session Notes

CD likened the current transformation of the humanities to an earlier transformation that dramatically altered how humanistic knowledge was made and circulated in U.S. colleges and universities. After the Civil War, the European model of the research university, often referred to as the Humboldtian research university, came to have an impact on American higher education. The research university made learning a specialized, discipline-based experience that separated the “two cultures” of the arts, humanities and interpretive social sciences from quantitative social science, technology, and natural science. Higher education also became increasingly segmented into courses of standard duration, programs with fixed graduation requirements. This quest for order culminated in the mid-1920s, when the university curriculum crystallized into a form still recognizable now, in the twenty-first century.

One motivation for this transformation of the liberal arts model into the research university model of higher education was the U.S. economy. Many blamed the naiveté of American corporate leadership for the devastating Panic of 1957. Among those was Charles William Eliot, whose father had lost the family fortune in the Panic. Eliot strove, during his fifty years as President of Harvard University, to transform that institution into a modern research university. Along with Eliot, there was a major cultural emphasis on productivity, rather than process, and on fixed, machine-like results, all inspired by the monumental work of Frederick Winslow Taylor. Taylor decided not to go to Harvard Law School but, instead, to work in a pig iron factory where he developed his theories of “scientific labor management” designed to regulate human workers in all areas of endeavor to the kinds of standardized, regularized, routinized productivity outputs of assembly lines and other forms of machine labor. CD argues that the
same idea of quantifiable, measurable “outcomes” increasingly was applied to education, resulting in “scientific learning management.”

Results of this questioning include the refocusing of some college curricula on cost-conscious workforce preparation, coupled with the migration of student enrollments toward such curricula—and away from curricula that feature traditional humanities coursework. The consequences for the academic humanities have been harsh. But, CD argues, as this negative evaluation of the humanities has spread, so too have the elements—the tools and dispositions—of a reversal that could restore humanistic learning to the vital center of the university, and thus the university to the core of our common cultural life.

The tools are digital and the dispositions are those of “makers.” In CD’s view, digital tools applied with a “maker spirit” promise to transform humanities curricula such that outcomes are the inverse and opposite of what was valued in the university that evolved between the 1860s and the 1920s. Rather than sponsoring learning that is tailored (and Taylor-ed) to be quantifiable and measurable, the humanities in a digital era must prepare college graduates to adapt rapidly to changing social, political, and economic conditions, to work collaboratively across far-flung and cross-cultural networks, and to accomplish shared goals in environments filled with distraction. Adaptability, collaboration, accomplishment—these are the hallmarks of a new humanities for digital times. Unfortunately, just as academic humanists are discovering how these hallmarks might be enabling of a diverse, inclusive civil society, powerful voices of doubt are offering up pointed (though pointedly uninformed) criticism. These voices cannot be ignored, CD said. They must be engaged, engaged publicly, and engaged with compelling models of successful research and teaching. She concluded her remarks with a description of a course on the “History and Future of (Mostly) Higher Education” (https://www.coursera.org/course/highered). Among other course activities, some 12,000 students in an online course, led by fifteen graduate students in an onsite course at Duke, will create a crowd-sourced, collaborative timeline of innovations in higher education around the globe. They will also engage in a “thought experiment” where they design an institution of higher education from scratch and produce the materials needed to promote it. The purpose of this experiment is to engage students and faculty in a humanistic exercise in thinking about the kind of higher education we might want, desire, and need if we did not have our legacies of Industrial Age divisions, bureaucracies, silos, and standardized metrics.

Complementing CD’s overview of transformations in higher education writ large and in the humanities specifically, PJ described various models of the sort that might, as CD suggested, lead to renewed public interest—and confidence—in the academic humanities. Among these models is the humanities “lab,” exemplars of which can be found at Stanford University (the Stanford Humanities Lab, http://humanitieslab.stanford.edu/) and the Maker Lab in the Humanities at the University of Victoria (http://maker.uvic.ca/). In addition to established digital humanities and new media labs such as these, there is a “temporary lab” model worthy of attention. For example, Duke University evolved a temporary Haiti Lab in its John Hope Franklin Humanities Institute (http://www.fhi.duke.edu/labs/haiti-lab) that concentrated and integrated research, educational, and practical resources in response to the January 2010 earthquake centered near Port-au-Prince. PJ’s own efforts have been focused on developing the Game Changer Chicago (GCC) Design Lab (http://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/gamechanger/), which is grounded in the belief that “[g]ames have the power to change reality” and that youth have the capacity “to create games that are authentic, meaningful, and powerful tools for learning and social change.” Games developed in the lab speak to social justice issues (e.g., homophobia and threats to environmental sustainability), as well as to the development of literacies appropriate to STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) fields. The GCC lab also foregrounds digital and twenty-first century literacies. In PJ’s view, key benefits of the humanities lab model are as follows: (1) students master design principles not by means of
abstract study but as they think through practice that features testing and iterating of key concepts; (2) labs enable flexible learning organized around a project in contrast to rigid learning that conforms to a fixed curriculum; (3) labs foster collaboration that overcomes the isolation of individual learners that has been characteristic of traditional models of humanities research and teaching; (4) labs are open to involvement by faculty experts who are not themselves expert users of digital technologies; (5) lab activities can focus on transdisciplinary forms of knowledge, promoting the relationship between the humanities and sciences; (6) labs support learners’ acquisition of real-world skills (including grant-writing and other fundraising skills); and (7) labs have the potential—not yet fully realized—to incorporate attention to social justice issues that became a priority in the humanities after their “cultural turn,” but that have often been bracketed out of early forms of digital humanities scholarship.

Participants’ Contributions
After delivering their introductory remarks, CD and PJ asked participants to engage in a “Think-Pair-Share” exercise. (For details on Think-Pair-Share pedagogy, see CD’s HASTAC blog post on the subject at http://www.hastac.org/blogs/cathy-davidson/2012/04/08/single-best-free-way-transform-classroom-primary-lifelongl-any-size—.) The question put to participants was this: What things are happening at your institution to make the humanities central to your students’ lives? In particular, what are three things you have done or witnessed at your university or institution that support the humanities as they transform in the 21st century? Participants spent a short time thinking about and drafting responses on 4 x 6 in. index cards, then a short time paired with partners with whom they shared responses. They then shared the responses with the group as a whole. What followed was an open reporting of individuals’ highest priority responses. Reporting and discussion were documented in a public Google Docs file by several University of Chicago students. At session’s end, participants submitted their index cards, and contents of the cards were added to the Google Docs file. What follows is adapted from the Chicago students’ documentary efforts.

Priorities voiced in group discussion by participants:

- WFMT Radio: As the home of Studs Terkel, work on digitizing his radio and audio archive, making it searchable with scholarly narrative, and creating the capacity for mashups.
- Jonathan Arac, University of Pittsburgh: Hope to make humanities central to students by giving students the ability to major in an area of knowledge (the humanities) in which they are interested.
- Field Museum, Chicago: Interactive with area university students, engagement with science and anthropology labs, an integration of science and cultural studies with an eye towards training students of all ages how to think about the world in an integrated way with hands-on experiences.
- Dartmouth College: An event that showcased how professors and students collaborate from different fields on a research program. Students would come up and explain that they didn’t even know they did research in the humanities. Important towards sharing the different kinds of collaborative relationships and spaces that exist, and how to get those messages out.
- Don Bialostosky, University of Pittsburgh: Meeting with students and parents at recruitment and major showcase events to speak to what they do in the humanities.
- Pacific Lutheran University: Get alumni together in order to talk about people out in the work world successfully with the hope that real world work experiences will positively
influence students. Discipline focused university, so many students have their first experience in a humanities environment.

- California Digital Library, University of California: Working to provide tools and services especially for humanists. For example, the Data Management Planning Tool (https://dmp.cdlib.org/), which can be used to help secure national funding. Looking to provide support for graduate students. Libraries across the country also support the digital humanities with maker labs.

- Lucy Rinehart, DePaul University: In general education curriculum, 4 of the 6 domains of the university are humanities-based. In upper-level English classes, social engagement classes have one or two English students. The term “humanities” often doesn’t mean anything to many students or their parents. Started a journal that publishes a best of graduating seniors; if you choose a field, this is what you can expect.

- University of Washington, Simpson Center: Offer the certificate in public scholarship for doctoral students in order to develop the notion that engagement in the practical arts should be in their portfolio. Mechanisms: flexible curriculum offering things such as one-credit courses in project management or for visiting scholars.

- Chicago Humanities Festival: Video tape almost all lectures, performances (events that are capable of being recorded). Available online. Online presence grown; almost the same number of people outside of US downloading the content as American users. Allows for reaching teachers. Ties together groups of programs that teachers will teach. Programs online that fit with MLK Day or give more resources. Kids can see these at home and then discuss in class. Focus is particularly high school students.

- Cathy Davidson, Duke University: In the PhD Lab in Digital Knowledge, students create professional websites for themselves that might include a professional blog, syllabi for courses they teach, teaching philosophy, a resume, published articles, a dissertation prospectus, relevant ancillary interests, anything that presents a well-rounded picture. A recent survey of those conducting interviews at a professional meeting showed over 70% Googled candidates to learn about them. A professional website ensures that curated content is what comes up first. In addition to curating their online professional identity, in making a website for themselves they master digital literacies, including design. In the PhD Lab, MFA and PhD students work and learn together, each offering a different set of skills and perspectives to the other.

- Patrick Jagoda, University of Chicago: The Game Changer Chicago Design Lab uses digital storytelling, computer games, and emerging new media forms to explore social and emotional health issues, social justice, and civic responsibility with youth on the South Side of Chicago. The Lab works primarily with urban youth of color between the ages of 14 and 20. The Lab brings together university faculty and game designers, as well as graduate and undergraduate students in the humanities, local high-school youth, visiting artists and designers, and community organizations. Collaborative projects include participants in digital media design, development, playtesting, dissemination, research studies, evaluation, and grant writing. One large-scale learning experiment was the alternate reality game, The Source, which was run in summer 2013 (http://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/gamechanger/portfolios/the-source/).

Priorities gleaned from participant-submitted index cards:

- Strengthening financial support for doctoral students in the humanities.
Offering a one-year MA in Humanities with strong co-curricular support on academic and career networks.

Curricular integration of college humanities courses with local art museums, libraries, and performing arts centers.

Developing new writing and DH course for computer science students.

Make 4-6 of the “liberal studies” requirements humanities areas.

Make creative writing courses that also fulfill the social engagement and service-learning courses, also a way to show power of good writing in social justice, public benefit, and society.

Digital Studies Certificate initiative, across the campus.

Investment in undergraduate research, including in the humanities.

Increased humanities center programming of interest to students as well as faculty.

Sponsorship of ethnographic inquiry into “university narratives” particular to the institution.

New general education program that is both humanistic and career-centered, making case that writing, reading, literacy skills are humanistic and are useful to careers.

General education program asks life questions about sustainability and other issues of concern.

Online instruction and joint classes offered to make university more accessible.

Alumni gatherings to show students what they can do with their degrees in the humanities in particular.

Self-designed majors so those who are not humanities majors can supplement coursework with humanities courses to see how humanities questions enrich and enlarge their interest areas.

Retooling general education for an extended engagement with culture.

**Conclusion**

As befits an interactive workshop on the humanities in a digital age, here are two digital traces of what transpired during the session:

- Google Docs accounting of participants’ discussion and index card submissions ([http://goo.gl/DDsuyF](http://goo.gl/DDsuyF)).

- A YouTube video (58:59) of the session produced by the Chicago Humanities Festival ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BahiYsw8Wlw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BahiYsw8Wlw)).
Session #4 – How to Do Humanities on a Regional Scale

Facilitator: Gregg Lambert (Syracuse University)
Moderator: Wendy Wall (Northwestern University)
Note Taker: Siobhan Somerville (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)

Session Notes
After introducing Professor Gregg Lambert (GL), Professor Wendy Wall (WW) asked him to address two questions regarding his work with the Central New York Humanities Corridor: (1) Why a regional (vs. national, or some other scale)? (2) And could you provide practical information on what you’ve done and what the challenges were?

GL provided an overview of the Central New York Humanities Corridor, a regional collaboration among Syracuse University, Cornell University, and University of Rochester, as well as the New York Six Liberal Arts Consortium (Colgate University, Hamilton College, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Skidmore College, St. Lawrence University, and Union College). The focus of the collaboration is to provide research-based funding for faculty at these institutions in seven areas of humanistic inquiry: Philosophy (PHI), Linguistics (LIN), Visual Arts and Culture (VAC), Musicology and Music History (MMH), Digital Humanities (DH), Literature, Languages, and Culture (LLC), Archives and Media (AM). Since connectivity and collaboration are the original aims of the Corridor initiative, designated areas of shared scholarly strength were defined as “Clusters” that comprised “Working Groups” of faculty across the CNY Corridor; for example, last year (2013) there were over forty active working groups of faculty in different areas of research and collaborative activity, more than one-hundred events and meetings of various kinds sponsored by Corridor funding, and over fifteen-hundred faculty participated. Funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and additional support from Syracuse University, the Corridor is now in its eighth year and second phase of activities. The Corridor is connecting faculty together throughout the Central New York region.

In responding specifically to the first question, GL explained that, given our disciplinary cultures and professional networks, we have tended to overlook the scale of the region and, instead, continue to focus primarily on the national or, increasingly, on the global. But the regional scale offers immediate and attainable opportunities to build on research strengths of faculty at nearby institutions, and offers possibilities for productive and cost-efficient collaboration (such as co-hosting lectures and symposia, conferences and performing arts events, etc.), at the same time minimizing costs for each institution or unit.

Consequently, the Corridor network became especially active in the region in the midst of a financial crisis to address the disappearance of internal funding streams from departments and programs. Given the recent downsizing of many departments, regional collaboration can help develop a cohort of like-minded researchers for collaborative efforts, such as grants and book projects, research colloquy and working groups, especially in new areas of interdisciplinary inquiry that cannot be funded at the department level. Professor Lambert then gave several examples of past research collaborations and working groups, which can also be found on the Corridor website at:

http://www.syracusehumanities.org/mellon/

WW then spoke about the new initiative, Humanities Without Walls, led by Dianne Harris, Director of the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. (See notes from Session #7, p. 20 below for more from Dianne Harris.) Humanities Without Walls is a regional collaboration anchored in humanities centers at
institutions that are part of the CIC consortium (the “Big Ten”). With funding from the Mellon Foundation, the initiative will focus on two areas: summer workshops for graduate students pursuing alternatives to academic careers; and cross-institutional research on “The Global Midwest.”

**Discussion**
The discussion was then opened to the audience. Topics included:

- Intra-state vs. interstate regional collaborations;
- Comparison and differences from previous examples of institutional collaborations and consortia (e.g., Five Colleges in Massachusetts, Claremont Colleges, etc.);
- The dangers of being too dependent on outside funding, and the need to foster a collaborative financial environment between different institutions;
- Practical steps toward building relationships and networks, and how to internationalize institutions from a regional perspective;
- Comparison with models drawn from sustainable community development, and possibilities for regional collaboration on curricula (in addition to research);
- Experiences with tensions between sharing resources and forging a distinctive institutional identity (or “brand”);
- How to forge collaboration among humanities scholars who have been trained to work independently;
- Potential for involvement of retired faculty;
- Discussion of how to involve non-academic cultural institutions, communication strategies for reaching a broader public, and how to involve undergraduates.
Session #5 – How to Start your Own Humanities Festival

Facilitator: Teresa Mangum (University of Iowa)
Moderator: Matti Bunzl (Chicago Humanities Festival)
Note Taker: Alexandra Katich (Chicago Humanities Festival)

Session Notes

Iowa Humanities Festival
(http://obermann.uiowa.edu/programs/iowa-humanities-festival/2013-iowa-humanities-festival)

Teresa Mangum (TM): Because Des Moines is the state capital and where the legislators reside, it made sense to create the public festival in Des Moines rather than Iowa City where the Obermann Center is located. This posed unique challenges because Des Moines is two hours away from the university and there was no strong culture of collaboration across institutions or public arts organizations.

The first step in the process was to contact area humanities center directors and directors of cultural organizations in Des Moines which included the art museum, public library, Salisbury House, and the state humanities council. TM gathered a few administrators and faculty members in cultural disciplines to accompany her to Des Moines in order to meet with these cultural directors. They all gathered for lunch in order to build rapport, which was followed by a two-hour brainstorming session. At the session, each director explained their organizations’ missions and emphasized the importance of being frank when proposals would not further those missions. This helped set a tone of directness and honesty that was essential for creating a collaboration of trust.

From the perspective of the university mission, it was important that whatever was done needed to advance academic research and avoid adding any additional burdens to the professors. In looking for presenters, TM invited professors to apply and asked department chairs to nominate people. Those selected participated in rehearsals and the directors of partner institutions were brought in to talk about their audiences. After their presentations, the professors were gratified to discover that there were many non-specialized people who found their work interesting and the experience helped them learn to write for a larger audience.

The first festival was held on a single day and centered on a theme that highlighted the meeting space: Collecting, Collectors, and Collections. (You can find a brief report on the event created by a graduate student who is an alum of the Obermann Graduate Institute on Engagement and the Academy here: http://obermann.uiowa.edu/news/reflections-first-iowa-humanities-festival) The day was broken down into an opening panel that addressed the theme and included leaders in both academic and public humanities, the first breakout session (three simultaneous presentations), lunch, a keynote by NEH Chairman Jim Leach, the second breakout session (four simultaneous presentations), the third breakout session (three simultaneous presentations), and a closing panel that featured art museum directors and curators to offer final reflections on collecting and the value of collections. There were also library tours available throughout the day. TM stressed the importance of giving the audience choices and leaving them wanting more.

The budget for the festival was around $13,000 including in-kind support. Colleges and universities chipped in with the funding, they applied for a grant from Humanities Iowa (Iowa’s state humanities council) to pay the $200 honoraria, and the cultural institutions provided the site, staff members, and organized catering. All of the organizations collaborated on publicity. In
addition, a small fee was charged for attendance because people commit differently when they pay for a ticket and it helps to keep attrition rates lower. In the end, 150 people showed up.

The second festival will be held in April 2014. The venues will expand from the Salisbury House, a museum and cultural center housed in a historic mansion, to the Des Moines Art Center. An advisory committee was created that includes representatives from three universities, a liberal arts college, the Salisbury House, and the art museum in Des Moines. (As a result of our discussion, TM will also be seeking business leaders, representatives of the Mayor’s office, and a representative from the state government to participate in a larger advisory board for the future. The original core group would likely serve as the executive, working committee of that larger advisory board.) If the festival is to continue—as the organizers hope—it will soon be necessary to find long-term support, both in terms of resources and staff. With added assistance, the humanities festival could also expand to include an additional day, arts activities, and additional partners from colleges and cultural organizations across the state. We are already in conversations with the Des Moines Public Library, the State Historical Society, and the State Archaeologist’s Office. The State Humanities Council could also be a strong future partner. (We’ve begun to build the webpage for this festival here: http://obermann.uiowa.edu/programs/iowa-humanities-festival).

TM also stressed the importance of exit interviews and post-festival feedback. All of the directors committed to talking to at least 5 audience members for subjective feedback. In addition, the cultural partners facilitated a post-festival survey that provided invaluable information for future planning.

**Chicago Humanities Festival**  
(https://chicagohumanities.org/events/2013/animal)

Matti Bunzl (MB): CHF started with 10 programs and was built on three principles:

1. Arts and Humanities need to be under the same umbrella
2. Get the cultural institutions of Chicago talking to each other
3. Take the humanities to the public

In its 25th year, CHF has grown to approximately 100 programs. Events are typically an hour long – 40 minutes for the presentation and 20 minutes for questions. Like the Iowa Humanities Festival, CHF stresses the importance of paying presenters honoraria ($250) and charging for attendance. In addition, tickets for students and teachers are typically free or $5.

**Essential Recommendations for Starting a Festival**

- Don’t try to create a festival by yourself. You need partners and those partners should be located off campus. It is crucial to find ways to make attending less intimidating for the public.

- Partnerships are an elaborate network of reciprocities. It’s important to work collaboratively in balancing your needs with what is useful for the other organizations. You must have a clear sense of what you’re bringing to them.

- Use a wide concept of the humanities driven by what people find compelling. Humanities is how you think about ideas. You need to find the spark in your own community that will draw people in.
- Having a theme is recommended. Without a theme, it’s difficult to control the organizational work and to differentiate the festival from one year to the next. Plus, the audience finds the theme an invaluable entry point and the theme provides your organization with a key way to brand and market the festival.

- In most cases, charging for tickets is recommended to keep attrition rates lower. However, the Adelaide Festival of Ideas does not charge for most events because free festivals are an active part of the local culture. You need to determine whether the demand for payment will inhibit your audience from attending.

- Events should be shorter than you think they should be and it’s important to leave time for questions and to give audience members a space for discussion afterward. The conversations at the end of each session are often as powerful as the presentation. Also, people really want an opportunity to meet the speakers and talk to them directly. At the Iowa festival, presenters and guests ate lunch together and conversed at a closing reception, which was well-attended. Faculty had been encouraged in advance to make a point of introducing themselves to guests at both of these events.

- Professors need to be trained to engage with the larger public before giving a presentation. Simply reading a paper and conveying information is not enough. They need to be trained to communicate as genuinely good speakers. One shouldn’t talk over the heads of the audience, but also shouldn’t talk down to them. Comprehensiveness and newness of research are not important. Finding a way to package their passion for the subject matter and conveying it to the audience is key.

- Trying to appeal to more than one sense in the presentation is encouraged. A basic way is through the use of images. Another possibility is to build a talk around an object that can be passed around the audience and incorporate the tactile experience. Brief performances followed by discussion would also be effective. Finding ways to transcend the normal experience is vital.
Session #6 – How to Work with Your State Humanities Council

Facilitator: Esther Mackintosh (Federation of State Humanities Councils)
Moderator: Clark Hulse (Chicago Humanities Festival)
Note Taker: Carl Niekerk (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)

Session Notes
State Humanities Councils are, since the mid-1990s, overseen by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and as a national average receive between fifty and sixty percent of their budget from the NEH (which uses a population-based allocation formula). Most State Humanities Councils also receive funds from a variety of other sources, in many cases including state government. In contrast to state arts organizations, State Humanities Councils are not-for-profit institutions.

State Humanities Councils function differently from state to state. In some states they have a strong (and more or less exclusive) focus on local history and culture. Other State Humanities Councils may focus on community-based conversations, literacy, or immigration, including programs to educate the local population about other cultures. In Iowa the state humanities council emphasizes their grant-making program, though they are expanding their council-conducted programs, especially dealing with writing and writers. The Illinois council has an eclectic program, reflecting the diversity of the state.

Most State Humanities Councils seek to reach out to populations beyond academia, for example young people, lower-income groups underserved by cultural resources, rural or urban populations with a minimal cultural infrastructure and a greater learning curve, and prisoners. In general, the activities sponsored by humanities councils target broad audiences rather than specialists. They need to be publically relevant and demonstrate broad public impact.

Grants from State Humanities Councils can be as low as $500 to $1,000 and in most cases are not higher than $10,000. Grants generally have to be matched by the grantee, and the councils may have suggestions for additional funding sources. Indirect costs, such as faculty time and meeting space, may be covered by universities or other institutions involved in the organization of an initiative. It is important for academic humanists seeking state humanities council funding to build support for their project within their institution, as well as among non-university partner organizations.

The public impact of humanities-council-sponsored initiatives is sometimes hard to measure, but grants generally require reporting of data concerning audiences or other numbers of organizations and people involved. Activities may involve scholars engaging in dialogue with a broad audience or also research in which the public is involved. Council staff members are also willing to discuss draft proposals before their submission.

State Humanities Councils increasingly learn from each other and share programs. Examples are programs for health-care officials and programs that seek to increase access to knowledge among low-income audiences. State Humanities Councils also often cooperate with local groups.
Part 1 – General points / bigger questions:

1. Applying to foundations is not just principle investigator [PI] but group effort (making use of everyone’s expertise). Nothing happens in a vacuum, we rely on a network of scholars, generosity in sharing ideas, and – importantly – finding people on campus (or at other universities you could speak to) whose job it is to work with foundations.

2. Private foundations are different from federal, they are more free to set funding agendas (which can be restrictive, thus the importance of dialogue). Find out what they are interested in funding and don’t try to make them fund something else. Relationship building is often key, they may not have forms or guidelines as would be the case for govt. agencies. (Help the foundation to understand better what your center is doing, what your campus is doing, by generating – publicity/information about yourself/unit/university/endeavor, using good website, newsletter, etc). With private foundations, program officers typically become more engaged with you, helping to refine and craft your proposal.

3. How do you find out what a foundation is interested in? Foundations are differentiated internally (tech wing, research wing, liberal education wing, etc.), so important to know what the individual segment’s interests are. Foundations change over time and can be nudged, they may be willing to listen and morph, but engage them according to their terms/outlined areas of interest.

4. Keep up relations: maintain a good website, network, face to face visits. Bring your Dean, Provost, Chancellor, say thank you, let them know how your project is going in a face to face meeting. Be ready to propose the next thing as you report on the previous.

5. Without funding, how do you get buy-in from your faculty? Collaboration. Humanities centers are about creating new opportunities for faculty and students to do new work, to serve the campus, to keep bringing people into the conversation. They are not the playground of the director. They are a forum for new ideas/sharing; if you can do it on your own, there is no point in the conversation. So, if possible, look for things you cannot do on your own.:: Secure discretionary funding or backstopping money, which serves as a guarantee that faculty work is not “unpaid”.

6. What can universities contribute? Institutional support is vital, go ask for it; infrastructure, faculty buy-in, staffing needs. Often the proper apparatus for grants management doesn’t yet exist for the humanities (ex: moving money campus to campus; setting up a hub just to administer because foundations that provide humanities grants don’t tend to do things the way large federal science agencies work). What ultimately is the role of the campus? Getting the grants is great, but what’s the model for sustainability? What can the campus contribute after the foundation is finished with their contribution?
Take-away points:

1. Do your research
2. Prepare your publicity / begin building relationship
3. Follow up with a face-to-face meeting (bringing upper admin.)

Part 2 – Follow-up questions:

1. Question: How do you even begin? (For those schools just starting out, not already well established); how do you get people to invest? How do you get funders to not make grants only to the already well-funded campuses?

   Answer: Use the larger system (in this case, UC Merced is part of the larger UC network). Foundations want to make an investment in programs that are not going to go away; they support what is already strong to be sure that their money is well spent. To start, look for other, smaller foundations that may be more targeted for things you are interested in; collaborate with more established institutions.

2. Question: Sustainability – would you expect the grant to be it? How to do the smart thing at the outset to continue the grant beyond the initial funding period if there isn’t a natural resource/structure for it on campus?

   Answer: This is what happens when a foundation dictates a program for which there is not already faculty and resources on campus to support it – does not work very well. Always smart to think of this as seed money, not total money, or forever funding. Translate the foundation grant into part of a campus-wide campaign, endowment.

3. Question: How to think creatively about cost sharing?

   Answer: There is such a thing as a “bad grant” – a grant that costs the university money (keep reminding them that the sciences and other things cost more). Remind the administration that this is part of its national reputation and ranking. From the richer schools – demand cost share, because it signals investment on the part of the campus.

4. Question: Does the current apparent trend toward consortium-building initiatives mean less investment in individual campuses?

   Answer: No, individual funding is not going away (so we think).

5. Question: Can you suggest strategies for approaching foundations on behalf of a particular institution when the problem is broader than one institution? (ex: journal support / open access)

   Answer: Approach the foundation to fund the “study of” open access; think tank on how to solve the problem; so not funding the individual case (helping the one journal), but the underlying problem (open access). Use the problem to research a broader solution, with your institution as test case.
Most important thing about making the proposal:

1. Write a practical proposal whose outcome you can guarantee and for which you are willing to be held responsible.
2. At the same time, it should demonstrate aspiration, vision that suggests larger consequences / pay off.
3. Be as clear as possible about the above two levels, the “deliverables”.

Part 3 – General discussion / recommendations:

1) Looking at the next 25 years: how do we shape the transformation of the problems into solutions? Emory’s effort to transform the humanities, hiring of cross-disciplinary faculty. Good to be innovative, but this also creates new tensions, practical problems; even promotion and tenure questions (who is qualified to evaluate a candidate straddling all the different fields?). Important to keep practical questions in mind while thinking beyond the current shape of the university. And with that, keeping in mind that the humanities are not segregated but foundational to all the functions of the university.

2) Go after not only private foundations, but also government agencies (public programming, public service). Remember that foundations have different personalities (not unlike people); worth understanding that some will be easier to work with than others, some will work closely with you, some see themselves as “fertilizer” – helping to make things grow. Some will help to adjust your approach to make it more fundable by them. If rejected by one, don’t despair but move on to another.

3) Don’t forget NEH (even if they are a lot of work).

4) What to do with universities that are not interested in actively supporting the humanities? Or, institutions that don’t have infrastructure, such as a humanities center, already in place? Dealing with development offices (and almost Soviet-levels of bureaucracy) can be quite stultifying. One solution is to work with the Dean’s office (rather than Provost), more immediately accessible/interested. And collaborate/talk to people in other universities, who have advice, practical knowledge, networks.

5) Programs vs. structure: some foundations are very program oriented, and programs frequently evolve into structures, but many foundations presume a structure is already in place before they fund program building; the sciences have “labs” – what do we have? Help to distinguish the programmatic from the structural and what that means, how that works for the humanities. What to do when the necessary structure is not there yet?

6) More meetings like this! (in warmer places, like Miami); collaboration between CHF and conferences of learned societies when they have annual meetings in Chicago.
Session #8 – How to Be a Better Grant Writer

Facilitator: Nancy Abelmann (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)
Moderator: Danny Greene (Newberry Library)
Note Taker: Dara Goldman (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)

Session Notes
The session was led by facilitator Nancy Ablemann (NA, via Skype) and respondent/co-facilitator Daniel Greene (DG). NA described the program she supervises at the University of Illinois to help humanities faculty who are interested in seeking funding sources for their research. She summarized what she has learned (the principal “aha” moments) through that experience, and highlighted some of the common mistakes that faculty make in writing grant proposals. DG commented and expanded on NA’s insights from the perspective of a grant application reader. Their comments were then followed by a discussion/question period in which audience members discussed the specific grant-related needs of different institutions and of different constituents within institutions (junior faculty, mid-career, senior faculty, grad students).

First, NA explains what she has built in grant-writing support at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC):
- Specific grant-related info sessions (i.e. National Endowment for the Humanities [NEH] other fellowships faculty are interested in)
- Gateway sessions – chance for an individual faculty member to sit down with their research agenda and discuss possible grant opportunity
- Grant writing target groups (humanities, Guggenheim, American Council of Learned Societies, social sciences)
- Specific writing and editing of grant proposals
- First book writing workshops/writing group

The role of the grant writing facilitator/mentor:
- Importance of combination of sincere respect and harsh criticism
- Not about judging the integrity of each research project
- Not about turning everyone’s work into what we would do
- Paying attention to the disjuncture between the spoken and written word (using how people explain things clearly in conversation to develop a strong written proposal), i.e. having faculty turn proposal face down and simply explain their project

Biggest “aha” moments of this project for NA:
- amazed at how hungry faculty are to be part of a community of ideas
- blown away by faculty generosity, passion, and curiosity
- how many faculty feel that being able to sit down with a few people and just talk through their research project is a unique and welcome experience
- whether or not they get the grant, the process has advanced their work

NA turned to a handout illustrating 10 mistakes that people make, based on collective wisdom of participants in program. (Can find below, beginning on p. 28.)
- Strategy of writing groups: start with one paragraph or one page and stay with that until it is perfected; then scale up
• Problems that persist in the shorter version often DO NOT get solved with additional language in longer version

NA discussed 5 of the 10 points:

#2 Opening vignette that isn’t telling – surprising how often we pick the wrong vignette (perhaps because it doesn’t evolve with project).

Solution: need to articulate what vignette is supposed to do and constantly revisit whether it is still performing that function appropriately.

#3 Not being able to put everything in the first paragraph; everyone saying you need to bring this point up front, but how can everything be put up front?

Solution: clear pithy language really can capture the essence of the project; resist natural temptation/tendency to warm up and build to the core claims.

#4 Fear of glossing: concern that people will be insulted by too much explication or definition of terms.

Solution: This fear is unfounded; proper explicactions help clarify; the tone can avoid the problem of condescension; even specialist readers appreciate having the use of terms clarified or explained.

#6 Underestimating the significance of our contribution; we tend to emphasize the theoretical contribution and downplay the practical.

Solution: The most successful grant proposals tend to emphasize the practical impact and draw out the theoretical/abstract contributions from there.

#7 Avoiding our previous books. The easiest way to talk about how you arrived at a particular project is through our previous work; we tend to avoid this either out of exhaustion, fear of redundancy, or concerns of self-aggrandizement

Solution: We are single scholars, our own story/intellectual biography might be the easiest way to make sense of our current research questions and/or the potential contributions of the proposed work

DG discussed the handout, adding #11 and #12, two more mistakes that grant writers make.

#11 Failure to follow the directions provided by the granting institution, Grant writers don’t appropriately tailor their grant proposal to the specific requirements of the grant.

#12 Empathize with the plight of the reader. Remember that the reader has a huge stack of grant applications to get through. Writers can help make proposals more legible to readers.

Question to NA: It’s unlikely that more than one specialist in your field will be on a review committee; how do you communicate your work to humanists in other fields?
Question to NA: Could you talk about two common problems: first, overreaching in an application, and, second, how to provide an overview of a project that moves beyond traditionally dry chapter outlines?

NA: You cannot re-read requests for proposals enough. Appeal to non-specialist humanists to reduce jargon and use as much plain speech as possible. (“If I have to read a sentence twice to understand it, there is something wrong with the sentence”)

Problem of over-reaching: Readers are a great reality check, we don’t tend to over-reach as much in face-to-face interactions, so writing groups help to ground the project in more realistic goals.

DG and NA agree that chapter-by-chapter outlines don’t tend to help the grant proposal; relevant information should be in the body.

**Questions/Discussion from Audience**

Sue Levine [Director of the Institute for Humanities at University of Illinois at Chicago]: People include the big ideas, but they don’t tell you how they are going to achieve those things.

DG: How do you communicate your proposed contributions to knowledge in the field to non-specialists?

NA: You are working on something that will look different because of your work on it. What is that something? How is it going to be different? Why? Stay with that idea rather than “my work engages with Habermas’s concept of the public sphere”.

Jana Moser [Northwestern press]: Getting people to write a media-friendly abstract that is more reader-friendly, can be used when promotional materials are prepared.

Alice [last name], Confluence Center, University of Arizona: What conditions at the U of I have allowed you to build structure and support for grant writing and writing groups, etc.? What can faculty do at institutions that can’t offer similar support?

NA: Her position was borne of faculty advocacy and demand for humanities support in research; need to convince administration that this is a worthwhile investment; we spend money and resources to bring leading humanities scholars, can maximize that investment with a small amount of support.

DG to NA: How to articulate and measure the outcomes of your office?

Need to understand and appreciate that these grants are extremely competitive and we have to evaluate the intrinsic and intellectual impact of these programs, apart from the grant monies secured. For example:

- Library resources and information available on grants, foundations, history
- Look at ambitious peers and who has been funding them
- Looking at acknowledgments of books and where grant money has come from

Christopher Bush [Northwestern, Department of French and Italian]: What do you do if your work is more theoretical?

NA: Question of balance and the “how” that Susan mentioned. We sometimes have a tendency to begin and end there.
Javier Durán: Sometimes it is a struggle between the argument and the outcomes/deliverables that result from the argument.

Christina Stanciu [Virginia Commonwealth University; Newberry Library Fellow 2013-14] – How do you start a writing group for grant writing and first-book writing?
NA: Form one with people at a similar point. Use Humanities Center, have larger group of people get into a room 2-3 times to discuss their one paragraph may lead to natural clusters of 2-3 people.

Commitment to writing partnerships; if you form writing groups, you have to be committed to doing the work required/expected.

Sue Levine: Need to put many of the things we are talking about into our graduate teaching and not just in faculty development.

People who have gone through the program regularly say the program has changed the way they teach and mentor graduate students.

Collective recommendations or further questions:

- strength in numbers: using databases and faculty profiles to identify faculty with similar interests
- importance of feedback and “revise and resubmit” success rate; ask for feedback when available and try again; review feedback with a partner or mentor
- connection between seeking funding and intellectual community
- changing role of external funding in promotion and tenure processes?
Ten mistakes we all make in humanities grant writing
… and how a writing group can help

1. A title that isn’t doing the job

Titles are important: they are the shortest-hand of our work, the pith, the poetry (this can also be said of the genre of grant proposal narratives). They should first speak to our central contribution. A title that announces an argument that is never fulfilled or that is contradicted in the work is truly a lost opportunity. The best titles also evoke, helping the reader to see something anew. We grow attached to our titles, but most often we need to let go of them once, twice, or more. (Chapter titles are no less important.)

...And how a writing group can help

Readers are often much better than we are at recognizing what key words or phrases must be included in the title – as well as the key contributions that an exciting title should reflect. A collaboratively generated list of these words and phrases is a great way to begin brainstorming a new title. Readers are also arbiters of that fine line between clever and precious.

From the trenches:
Over 4 years and hundreds of proposals, only one title did not change (and it was a senior scholar and a mature project).

2. An opening vignette that isn’t telling

Opening a narrative with a vignette – e.g., a verse, a field research moment, a quote, etc.— can be a great strategy. But, interestingly, we often choose one that does not speak to the largest contributions of our work. As with titles, it is very easy to become overly attached to vignettes, as they are often rich and evocative (and we chose them because we like them – for whatever reason). So we need to be ready to discard them as our project grows and changes course.

...And how a writing group can help

Often our readers simply don’t get it – “But what does that (a verse, a moment, a quote, etc.) have to do with your project?” Readers help us check in with our vignette: asking how do we intend to use it? What does it tell? And this can help us figure out what, after all, it is that we mean to do in our work. Readers are often also best at telling us when it is time to let go because our project has moved on conceptually.

From the trenches:
“Oh yeah! Nobody liked my opening vignette but me!”

3. Thinking “I can’t put everything in the first paragraph”

Most of us find our way into our arguments through writing; typically we warm up as we go, building towards that statement in which we finally tell the reader (and ourselves) what the work
is really about. So, “move the good stuff up” is a good rule of thumb. And when we do, erase the bread crumbs! We thus save our reader from having to stumble through our warm up.

When readers tell us “move the good stuff up,” we often respond: “Put everything in the first paragraph? Impossible!” But, we actually can do it. We truly can announce the gist and stakes of the project very efficiently in a few sentences.

...And how a writing group can help

Readers are great at picking out hidden revelations (most often buried in the chapter précis) that announce the heart of the project. And they will be the very ones to say, “Tell us this up front so that we can follow your thinking.”

4. Fear of “dumbing down”

Many of us are disinclined to “gloss” by (allow me to gloss) providing a brief explanation of key terms. When it comes to the bread and butter terms of our fields, some worry about stating the obvious or even more concerning, insulting our colleagues. Most often when we force ourselves to really clarify our key terms, we discover what it is that we are really aiming to do, and alas we also often discover flaws in our reasoning.

...And how a writing group can help

If other “smart people,” including those in our discipline, tell us that they want to know what we mean by a particular word or phrase, we can stop fretting about that imagined critic who will think less of us for explicating even the most basic concepts (as well as actors and events) in our field. If we are truly stating the obvious our readers will tell us, but most readers will be delighted to have the clarification.

From the trenches:

“Yes, fear that I was lowballing my fellow faculty members. I didn’t want to seem as if I were talking down to them. But when I thought about how I reacted to others’ writing, often wanting more exposition on key terms myself, I realized that I didn’t need to worry about this.”

“Yes, I was like, oh, if [Name] and [Name] want me to explain this I don’t need to worry about having ‘dumbed it down’!”

5. Resisting plain speech

When it comes to grant writing, we often feel an acute pressure to impress readers as especially smart and clever: interestingly, we then often end up sounding least like ourselves. Direct, jargon-free prose is best.

...And how a writing group can help

Every sentence in our proposal should be one that the generally educated person in our area (e.g., humanities, humanistic social sciences) would be able to parse on the first read. Readers will let us know if this is not the case.
6. Underestimating the significance of our contribution

Most of us make our contributions to the larger field and theoretical discussions through our areas of specific expertise (e.g., a genre, a period, a place etc.). Most successful grant narratives convey how we will see differently (i.e., about a genre, period, place etc.) on account of our project. Abstract theoretical contributions seldom drive a successful proposal; it is best to let theoretical contributions emerge from articulating how our research changes our understanding of something in our world.

...And how a writing group can help

 Often, we bury the most exciting “Aha” because it seems less jazzy or impressive than a theoretical contribution. Sometimes it is best to let others tell us what they think is our biggest “Aha.” We often don’t know, or if we do - we fear that this isn’t the most exciting part of our work.

7. Evading our previous book/s

For those of us on a second (or third, etc.) book/project, we often resist discussing (or even thinking about) the new work in relation to the old (and who can blame us for wanting to move on from a multi-year effort!). Often, however, the easiest entry to the new work is our own story: How did we get to this project, this argument, this contribution? This is not to suggest that our proposals need be personal confessionals, but that it is often intellectual trails that provide the most direct, and engaging, access for our reader. As this is our story, it is also often the easiest to tell – in the most compelling and straightforward terms.

...And how a writing group can help

 As fellow scholars, readers always will ask about our scholarly trajectory and what it is that sparked our interest in this particular project. Their intellectual curiosity reminds us that this story often works best to excite others about our work.

From the trenches:
“ I was afraid to come off as braggy (which is unfounded and simply overly self-conscious).”

8. Failure to communicate where we are at in the project

Research projects entail many phases and activities. All of us struggle with clearly explaining which phases or activities are to be funded through the particular proposal at hand. It seems simple, yes; but it’s very difficult to make this clear in the narrative. We must always explicate what point we are at in the process (e.g., which chapters are done, begun, outlined; which archives have been visited, contacted, etc.). This must be clearly articulated especially if the grant is to only cover one piece of the larger project.

...And how a writing group can help

 Readers will quite naturally ask us where exactly we are in the project and what remains to be done.
9. Failure to communicate what we plan to do with their funds and our time

Even when we have successfully described a project or a book, we often forget to tell our funder what (exactly) we will accomplish with their support. We must always make it clear how we will be spending our time over the grant period (e.g., in the archives, writing (which chapters), etc.) and how these activities will move the project towards completion.

...And how a writing group can help

As fellow researchers, readers can help us detail what it is that we will actually be doing during the grant period. Most importantly, however, readers can offer a “reality check” as to what is really feasible over the grant period: in the company of fellow researchers, we are less inclined to wax unrealistic.

10. Draft dodging and giving up too soon

Most first drafts are miserable. Expect to write 15-20 drafts. Faculty rank makes no difference.

Also, many of our first grant submissions on a project are really just beginnings. Several months later we might be ready to take another stab: seeing the project in a fresh light, we now know what to do – and a second wind does wonders. Granting agencies do not punish the good student who tries again. They reward her! And we will have improved our chances.

...And how a writing group can help

We get to see how rough our colleagues’ initial drafts are, and how many drafts it takes them, and we end up being relieved that we all have the same feet of clay. We can then take our egos out of the equation and get to work.

From the trenches:
“One of the reasons faculty writing groups work so well, or at least worked so well for me, is that they build revision and time for revision and multiple drafts into the process. We got started well before deadlines, were accountable to one another, and I was able to put my work through the revision it needed.”

Further thoughts on how a writing group can help – from the trenches

“Writing groups are fun: We learn about our colleagues’ work. We make connections. We improve campus morale. We make friends…. And, oh yeah, it also advances our own thinking, research organization, and writing—and some of us get grants too!”

And a “p.s.” – also from the trenches

“Maybe that last hot sentence [in Nancy’s draft] can say something about how wonderful it feels to build camaraderie with one's colleagues in relation to one's research, which is, after all, what we love best.”