



Home of the Harriet P. Henry
Center for the Book
674 Brighton Avenue
Portland, Maine 04102-1012
mainehumanities.org



2019
ANNUAL REPORT

JOIN THE DISCUSSION



JOIN THE **mhc**

**We connect...people with books,
communities with ideas, and
strangers with one another.**

The Maine Humanities Council is a statewide non-profit organization that uses books, poetry, and big ideas to bring people together to discuss issues of importance. We're a program partner, grantmaker, and connector of people and communities. Our connections strengthen our society and help shape the future of Maine. As Maine's affiliate of the **National Endowment for the Humanities** (NEH), we offer humanities programs and grants for all Mainers.

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HARRIET P. HENRY CENTER FOR THE BOOK

The Maine Humanities Council is home to the Harriet P. Henry Center for the Book, Maine's affiliate for the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. The Library of Congress Center for the Book was established in 1977 to promote books, reading, libraries, and literacy. In 1997 the Maine Humanities Council established the Maine Center for the Book as a state affiliate of that program. It was renamed the Harriet P. Henry Center for the Book in 2003, in honor of Maine's first female judge, a former Board chair of MHC and a longtime supporter of the humanities.

HOW TO REACH US:

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@MaineHumanities
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A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Throughout 2019, in every county across the state, the Maine Humanities Council gathered Mainers together to read, think, and talk with one another. In settings like public libraries, adult education centers, healthcare facilities, correctional institutions, and many more, MHC programs brought folks together, creating new connections based on the shared experience of poetry, fiction, history, and big ideas.

We believe that gathering around texts can be a powerful tool for the strengthening and transformation of Maine communities. Amid widespread concern over growing isolation and polarization within our communities, these humanities-based experiences provide unique avenues for connection and deep conversation about matters of importance. Maine Humanities Council programs are designed to meet folks where they are, support people in finding their own voices, and invite them into fuller engagement with what's happening around them.

In 2020, the MHC will expand its efforts to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in all our programs and grants. It has always been a core belief of the MHC that the humanities are for everyone, and we intend to work hard to live out that commitment more fully than ever in the coming months and years.

I hope you enjoy this annual report. As we look back over 2019, we are proud of what the MHC has accomplished for the people of Maine, but more important, we feel energized and optimistic about opportunities for increased impact and effectiveness in the year to come!

Hayden Anderson
Executive Director



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Book Groups

Libraries | Schools | Veteran Centers | Hospitals | Hospice Centers
Domestic Violence Prevention Centers | Recovery Centers | Prisons
Community Centers | Office Buildings | Adult Education Facilities

2019 has been a year of reflection for MHC, and one result has been a renewed clarity in our commitment to book groups. Book groups are simply one of the best ways we know to foster meaningful discussion among people who may not know each other yet. Each group is convened by a community partner and guided by an experienced facilitator. At each meeting people reflect together on poetry, books, stories, and discuss the ideas and questions they see at work in what they've read. People practice finding words for what they want to say and listening to each other carefully. They leave feeling more connected to their community, better able to appreciate its variety and to see the value of their own contribution. We are working harder than ever to make book groups accessible to anyone, anywhere in Maine. Really, truly, wherever Mainers gather.

Photo Credit: Tim Byrne

Veterans

*They were sitting in hushed silence, listening
To the great harper as he sang the tale
Of the hard journeys home that Pallas Athena
Ordnained for the Greeks on their way back from Troy.*

Odyssey, 1.342-5

In 2019, we expanded the reach of our *Veterans Book Group* program: partnering with Veteran Mentors of Maine, we added new book groups in correctional facilities around the state, bringing together justice-involved veterans to reflect on the unique concerns they face. Always developed with a veteran co-facilitator, *Veterans Book Group* offers veterans an opportunity to connect deeply with each other around books, stories, and poems. We worked closely with veterans to create the pilot of this program in 2014. Since then, we have continued to build *Veterans Book Group* programs with partners across Maine. Our *Veterans Book Group* is now a national model for meaningful engagement with Veterans.

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Libraries

*"We read books that one would not otherwise read...
expanding our awareness of new viewpoints and exploring
topics together."*
- Participating library

This year we have continued to deepen our vital partnership with the Maine State Library and our state's dense network of remarkable public libraries. We listen intently to what librarians tell us they need in order to support their communities – and we engage with them out front and behind the scenes to support the work they do. We continue to enrich our ongoing programming – our speaker's program, *World in Your Library*, our summer reading program, *Read ME*, our book group program, *Let's Talk About It*, and our poetry performance and discussion series, *Poetry Express* – plus in 2019 we developed *Imagine Maine's Story: A Bicentennial Library Toolkit* to support libraries in the coming year as they engage with their communities around Maine's bicentennial.

Schools

Our support for Maine's schools is substantial, ongoing, statewide – and we are constantly looking for new ways to meet the needs of teachers and students alike. In 2019 we began piloting discussion programming for school age kids using two promising models – *Book Group* and *Consider This*. These offer exciting new ways for us to enhance the lives of young people in Maine. At the same time, we continue to serve as a crucial partner to the Attorney General of Maine's office on the *Civil Rights Teams Project*, which works to increase student safety by reducing bias-motivated behaviors and harassment in schools. And every year we play a key role in organizing *Maine National History Day*, an annual event for teachers and students in grades 6-12 that promotes critical thinking skills through project-based learning.

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GRANTS

Photo Credit: Erik Peterson

Our grants support and encourage a deeper understanding of ourselves and one another, building lasting connections and reaching diverse, multigenerational, and rural audiences.

In 2019 we awarded grants in all of Maine's 16 counties.

TOTAL GRANTS
AWARDED
45



TOTAL AMOUNT
AWARDED
\$85,648

Featured Project

READINGS FROM STILL MILL – Supported by a Maine Humanities Council Mini Grant, this cross-cultural and multi-generation community project was a commemoration of the Patricia Ranzoni's anthology *Still Mill: Poems, Stories and Songs of Papermaking in Bucksport, Maine 1930-2014*. The event included readings and song performances by displaced workers and their families, a community discussion on the history of Bucksport, and more.

Learn more about MHC Grants:
Contact **Jerome Bennett**, Program Officer
jerome@mainehumanities.org

Kicking off Commemorations

How can we use books, poems, and big ideas to help Mainers engage with the Maine's bicentennial?

We began asking ourselves this question over a year ahead of time. With help from historians and educators and anthropologists, librarians and facilitators, we identified important themes and started developing lists of compelling readings for our book groups. We encouraged others to ask their own questions early too. Last March, at *Bicentennial or Bust*, we gathered representatives from organizations all over Maine to jumpstart their thinking and planning. And last October, we kicked off the year with our own Big Question: "How should life be?"...the same big, important question we'll be asking throughout 2020.

March 8

Winter Weekend | Bowdoin College
w/ Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo*

March 15

Bicentennial or Bust | Augusta
Cultural organizations gather for tools
and tips on 2020 commemorations

April 25

Constance H. Carlson
Public Humanities Prize
Awarded to Monica Wood

August 29

READ ME on Maine Calling
Live from Bangor Public Library

October 2

NEH Chairman Jon Parrish Peede
Visits Maine, speaks
at Maine Historical Society

October 19

The Big Question:
How should life be?
MHC kicks off year-long
bicentennial programming

M A R C H

A P R I L

A U G U S T

O C T O B E R

Photo credit: R.K. Oliver

Photo credit: C Jessica Hills

Photo credit Max Gerber



L-R: Maine authors Sarah Perry, Tess Gerritsen, and Susan Conley

ReadME

SUMMER READING...STATEWIDE

Read ME is our statewide community read program, offered every summer. Two books, by Maine authors, are announced in the spring; participating libraries feature them and hold events all summer; and in August there's a special episode of *Maine Calling*, broadcast with a live audience. For 2019, recommending author Tess Gerritsen chose *After the Eclipse: A Mother's Murder, a Daughter's Search* by Sarah Perry and *Paris Was the Place* by Susan Conley.

The program supports Maine's writing community by featuring books by Maine authors, but also goes a step further. By asking a well-known author to recommend books by lesser-known writers, the process fosters supportive relationships among local authors.

The program is extremely easy for libraries to use: placing the two books and a sign on display is all it takes to start a community of people reading a book in common. But we also encourage and support libraries' hosting discussions, author talks, and other events around the summer's featured books. People who encounter the books participate in the ways that suit them best, joining formal discussions and events, attending or calling in to the *Maine Calling* show, talking informally with friends, or simply reading on their own.

If it sounds simple and low key, that's because it is. *Read ME* gets great books into people's hands, gets authors talking to each other, gets writers talking to their readers, gets readers talking to each other, all without fanfare or fuss. Quietly, persistently, *Read ME* draws people's attention to the vibrance of Maine, to the people who write books here, and to each other. For 2020, recommending author Lily King has chosen *Roughhouse Friday* by Jaed Coffin and *The Vigilance of Stars* by Patricia O'Donnell.



POETRY EXPRESS

"...this program showed folks that poetry does not need to be intimidating...it truly reflects the world around us."
- Participating library

In 2019 *Poetry Express* brought Maine poets and poetry to five new hosting libraries: Belfast Free Library, Auburn Public Library, New Vineyard Public Library, Liberty Library, and Pittsfield Public Library. At each location, community members selected Maine poems and used resources curated by Maine State Library. Participants then learned to perform their chosen poems in a workshop before hosting a community poetry reading and conversation event.

2019 also saw the beginning of an exciting new partnership with WERU Community Radio to broadcast recordings of *Poetry Express* events. MHC records the events and selected readings are broadcast every Sunday morning at 9:30, taking the power of poetry to even more Mainers. Tune-in to *Poetry Express*, in your community and on the airwaves.

Learn more about *Poetry Express*:
Contact **Jan Bindas-Tenney**, Program Officer
jan@mainehumanities.org

Maine Humanities Council supporters change lives. Your gifts provide the books, facilitators, and spaces for transformational conversations that help teachers, students, Veterans, immigrants, rural residents, and more create community. It's powerful, and it happens statewide thanks to you.



EVERY GIFT MATTERS

Would you like to support the programming mentioned in this publication, and other MHC projects around the state?

Ways to GIVE

Online: mainehumanities.org

A monthly gift: only \$15 each month results in a \$180 total gift; \$50 per month gives \$600 by the year's end; and \$85 ends up being a generous \$1,020.

A qualified charitable distribution through your IRA, or gift of stock.

All gifts received by the Maine Humanities Council during Fiscal Year 2019 (11/1/2018 - 10/31/2019) are represented in these pages. If you donated after this time, you'll be thanked in our next Annual Report.

ANNUAL GIVING – FISCAL YEAR 2019

Federal, State, Corporate, Organizational, and Foundation Grants

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Simmons Foundation
State of Maine
Welch Charitable Fund of the Maine Community Foundation

Gifts from Individuals

MHC donors generously supported our statewide programming through the following funds: the Annual Fund, Winter Weekend sponsorships, the *Let's Talk About It* Book Registry (which purchases replacement books for our most-loved series), *Letters About Literature*, and the Constance H. Carlson Public Humanities Prize (awarded in 2019 to Monica Wood). This list includes gifts made during our 2019 fiscal year: between November 1, 2018, and October 31, 2019.

MHC Circle (\$5,000+)

Victoria and Allen Bornheimer
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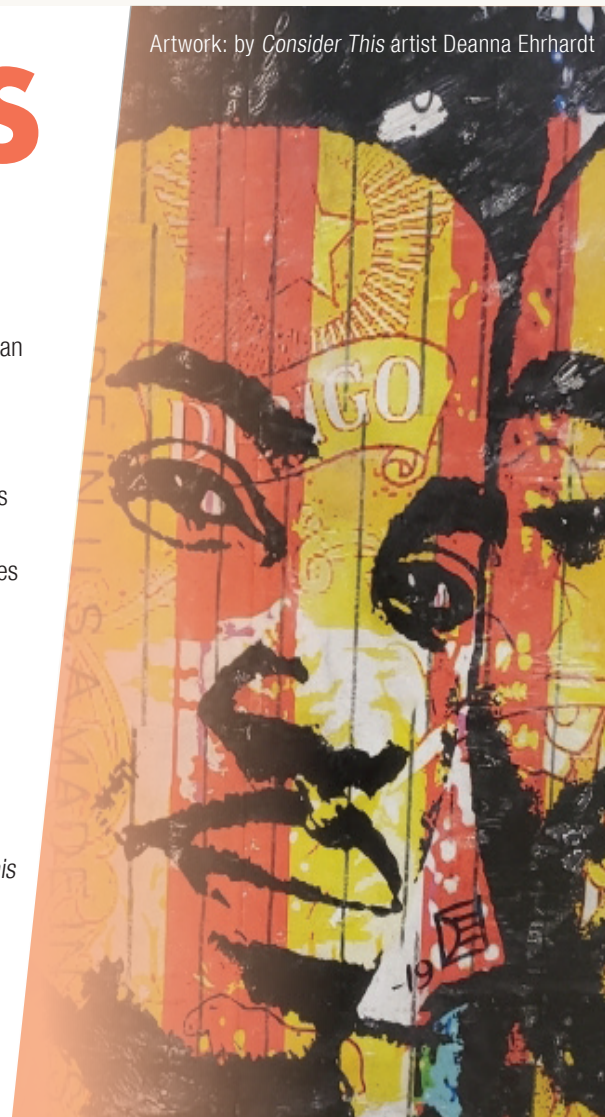
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Martha Barkley

Artwork: by *Consider This* artist Deanna Ehrhardt



CONSIDER THIS

Using storytelling and visual art to foster discussions on resilience.

2019 was the pilot year for *Consider This* — a year of experiment and adjustment that has resulted in an exciting new program model that uses storytelling and visual art to foster important community discussions. It started with an idea: since stories are a fundamental way that we come to understand our lives, what if one person in a community told their story? And what if that story were the focus for a community discussion? Our first program partners, members of the recovery community at Bangor's Together Place, quickly identified a key barrier: when a person tells their story in public, they put themselves at risk. And they helped come up with a solution: how about having an artist create a series of images based on someone's story? The images could be the focus of discussion — bringing a community member's personal story into the public without putting them on the spot.

In Bangor and in our two other pilot programs, among a general audience in Portland and at a public school in Lewiston, the program reflected the aims and needs of its own community. Each program looked different, but in every case the interaction between a person with a story to tell and an artist committed to representing core elements of that story through art proved to be a transformative experience in itself — and a spur to powerful community discussions. Keep an eye out for *Consider This* events near you.

Learn more about *Consider This*:
Contact **Jerome Bennett**, Program Officer
jerome@mainehumanities.org

\$100 - \$249
(continued)
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Pamela Taylor
Deborah Taylor
John Tewhey,
in honor of Maine's 200th birthday
Marina Towne
Yolanda Theunissen and Richard C. Veit

THE STATE OF OUR STORY 2019

During Fiscal Year 2019, the Maine Humanities Council had operating income of \$1,927,641 and operating expenses of \$1,702,540. Grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, including highly competitive grants, made up an important component of the budget. This support was supplemented by a diverse range of other income streams: from the Library of Congress, the State of Maine, generous support from private foundations, the individual contributions highlighted in this report, and program income and investments. Both the income and the expense figures reported in this figure below and in the Council's audited financial statements include in-kind contributions of time, mileage and materials, valued at \$388,543.

REVENUES 2018 — 2019

National Endowment for the Humanities	\$900,967.00
State of Maine Funding	\$57,190.00
Contributions and Grants	\$232,377.00
In-kind Contributions	\$388,543.00
Program, Investment, and Other Income	\$348,564.00

TOTAL \$1,927,641.00

EXPENSES 2018 — 2019

Programs, Re grants, and Technical Assistance	\$1,306,306.00
Administration	\$197,910.00
Fundraising & Marketing	\$198,324.00

TOTAL \$1,702,540.00