

**MAINE
HUMANITIES
COUNCIL**

Harriet P. Henry
Center for the Book
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2021
ANNUAL REPORT

JOIN THE DISCUSSION

What if...?

People could refile
their own stories
actually listened
change so profoun
if these stories
but in body? What
where we would we

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.

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#MaineHumanities

EVERY CORNER OF MAINE

Less than a week after my first day on the job here at the MHC, then-Assistant Director Anne Schlitt put me in the car and drove me to the St. John Valley in far northern Aroostook County.

That was my first time visiting a unique and beautiful part of the state, and I was continually amazed and delighted by the incredibly warm reception we received at every stop. But mostly what I remember is thinking: I need to keep coming back here. So, I did.

My first trip to the St. John Valley was special, but my next trip, and the next, and the next were even more so. Now that place is special to me not because it's new, but because it's familiar. The work of the MHC—the work of using the humanities to create connections and promote positive social change in Maine communities—is all based on relationships. And however exciting it is to visit a place for the first time, the way to build meaningful relationships is to keep showing up.

These past two years have caused us to expand the way we think about this fundamental aspect of what we do: keep showing up in Maine communities.

Our driving question this year has been "What If ...?" It's a question that has helped us imagine and try out new and better ways to create connection, promote agency, and inspire engagement with Mainers from every corner of the state. We're excited for you to join us as we keep asking. What if ...?



Hayden Anderson
Executive Director

GRANTS

Over **\$580,000** in support for nonprofit cultural organizations

86 grants awarded

16 Maine counties and both congressional districts represented

SUSTAINING THE HUMANITIES through the American Rescue Plan

The Maine Humanities Council was honored to distribute funding for general operating support and project support to assist Maine non-profit humanities and cultural organizations as they prepared for, responded to, and recovered from the coronavirus pandemic.

Funding for these grants was made available through the **National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)** initiative Sustaining the Humanities through the American Rescue Plan (SHARP) as part of the \$1.9 trillion **American Rescue Plan** of 2021.

Books, Poetry, & Big Ideas

JUST A FEW OF THE TEXTS PEOPLE ENGAGED WITH IN 2021

FICTION: *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe **NON-FICTION:** *Mill Town: Reckoning with What Remains* by Kerri Arsenault, *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You* by Jason Reynolds & Ibram X. Kendi **POETRY:** *A New Land: 30 Ground Breaking Poems* by Youth Poets, *A Telling Room Anthology* **PICTURE BOOK:** *The First Blade of Sweet Grass* by Suzanne Greenlaw & Gabriel Frey, illustrated by Nancy Baker

Whatever form they take, whether they are books or picture books, audio or video, texts allow us to engage with someone's voice together. Everyone can start, literally, on the same page...and go from there.

Engaging with people's stories, ideas, and experience of the world through texts also invites us to contemplate and share what we can, starting with our experience of the text. Performing in a Poetry Express program, or discussing stories in a Discussion Project, or engaging with a project supported by an MHC grant—everywhere people are working to understand what someone else is trying to say, and finding words for what they want to say themselves.

We ground our work in books, poetry, and big ideas because they carry people's voices, sharing something important about their experience of living in the world.

MAINE SPEAKS

Sharing expertise and lived experience

One of our dreams is that everyone in Maine feels able to share with others those things that are most meaningful to them, and that everyone in Maine has the chance to listen to and learn from those ready to share their gifts. Over the course of 2021, we reshaped our successful library-focused speaker program in hope of getting a little closer to making that dream a reality.

What is a speaker for? What does a speaker share? Who gets to be a speaker? We've added nearly twenty new speakers over the past year. They are people who bring all sorts of experience and expertise to bear: writers, educators, scholars, organizers, storytellers, artists... people with something vital to share.

Who gets to host a speaker? Anyone in Maine, an individual or an organization, can apply to host a speaker through Maine Speaks.



We've reshaped our successful library-focused speaker program in the hope that everyone in Maine has the chance to listen to and learn from those ready to share their gifts.

BOOK FUND

Putting books in hands

We provide every Discussion Project with whatever texts they need, for participants to keep.

Providing the books ensures that every participant has ready access to the text the group will be discussing, in the same version, in the same condition. So from the very start, participants' interaction with the text is a common, shared experience.

After the program is over, the books...many people keep them, reread them, loan them out. Or pass them on to other people, who may or may not pass them on again. However it happens, those texts' voices circulate...who knows when someone might find them at just the right moment?

Giving to the MHC Book Fund, in any amount, directly supports one of the most important aspects of our work: putting books into people's hands all across Maine.



Every year, we support almost 100 Discussion Projects across Maine. The extraordinary network of facilitators we work with are key to making these Projects happen.

HOLDING THE DISCUSSION

We offer training and orientation to MHC facilitators when they start with us—and we keep them and ourselves growing and learning through regular professional development programming that responds to needs that arise in our work.

Last year, we brought two Wabanaki REACH programs, 'Interacting with Maine Wabanaki History' and 'Decolonizing Non-Native Communities' to our staff, board, facilitators, and program partners, so that we could all deepen our understanding of what it means to be living in this place together.

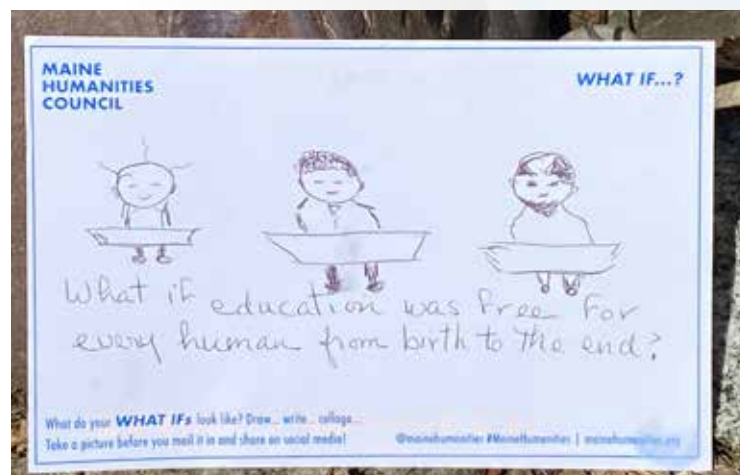
And after working with clinical social worker and UNE professor Arabella Perez on trauma-informed communication as a staff, we collaborated with her to develop and deliver skill-shares on trauma and resilience specifically for our facilitators. Trauma and resilience is now the focus of one of several MHC facilitator peer cohorts—groups of facilitators who gather less formally to learn from and with each other.

WHAT IF...?

A question everyone can ask

Our Big Question program was a chance to ask *What if...?* in a big way, to jump-start our work in the coming months and year. But as we deepen our engagement with Afrofuturism and Africanfuturism, that question is everywhere: in books and poems and conversations, in deciding what to do next, in making the next move. We are also asking it in Discussion Projects, on our social media platforms, and at 2022's Readers Retreat.

BIG QUESTION participants were invited to ask their own *What if...?* questions and mail them to the MHC. *What if...?* questions like:



"One of the great things about imagination...is that it's something to which we all have equal access"

- Ian-Khara Ellasante

Big Question Guides



Skylar Bayer, Assistant Professor of Biology, Aquaculture and Extension Specialist, Roger Williams University (left)

WHAT IF..we knew more about shellfish reproduction?



Ian-Khara Ellasante, Assistant Professor of Gender and Sexuality Studies, Bates College (right)

WHAT IF..there were no gender?



René Goddess Johnson, Founder and Lead Consultant, Embodied Equity (left)

WHAT IF..we could all see who we really are?



Maine Developmental Disabilities Council
A partnership of people with developmental disabilities, their family, and state and local agencies and organizations. (right)

WHAT IF..we were all valued?

Prize Winners

Since 1998, the Maine Humanities Council has awarded the Constance H. Carlson Public Humanities Prize to a Maine resident who has made exemplary contributions to Maine communities through the humanities. This year we are delighted not only to be awarding two Constance H. Carlson Prizes, but also to be inaugurating two new prizes: a Program Partner Prize and Facilitator Prize.

Constance H. Carlson Public Humanities Prizes

Joseph Jackson: For his humanities programming with Maine Inside Out, his efforts using poetry and other humanities work to reform the justice system, and his role as advisor in the Freedom & Captivity initiative.

Carol Dana: For her lifelong work to bring back, preserve, and teach the Penobscot language, and her work to preserve and share Penobscot storytelling.

MHC Facilitator Prize

Wendy Allen: For her leadership, mentorship of others, and her incredible work facilitating MHC Discussion Projects.

MHC Program Partner Prize

Literacy Volunteers of Franklin & Somerset Counties (LVFSC): For their innovation, creativity, and engagement with their community.



LVFSC Book Discussion team "Community Connect" (left to right): Sara Beech (staff), Elizabeth Cooke (volunteer), Matilda Holt (board member and participant), Barbara Averill (staff). Photo: LVFSC.



Joseph Jackson, Director of Leadership and Development, Maine Inside Out. Photo: Jen Hoffer



Carol Dana, Penobscot Language Master



Wendy Allen, Coordinator, Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition; MHC Discussion Project Facilitator

IT HAPPENS STATEWIDE THANKS TO YOU

The pandemic's second year brought its own raft of challenges, but the MHC was in a strong position thanks to our many partners around the state—with programs, but also with financial support. Your financial partnership helped us advance our work and better serve the communities of Maine. Thanks to you, our discussion groups, speaker talks, and facilitator mentorships built connections, engaged, and increased the agency of hundreds of people throughout Maine. Thank you for your incredible generosity and belief in this work.

We're proud to have you as our partners.

All gifts received by the Maine Humanities Council during Fiscal Year 2020 (11/1/2020 - 10/31/2021) are represented in the following pages. If you donated after this time, you'll be thanked in our next Annual Report.

Ways to GIVE

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

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.

MHC Book Fund: Putting books into people's hands all across Maine.

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

ANNUAL GIVING - FISCAL YEAR 2021

Federal, State, Corporate, Organizational, and Foundation Grants

The Betterment Fund
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Helen and George Ladd Charitable Corporation
State of Maine
Margaret E. Burnham Charitable Trust
Morton-Kelly Charitable Trust
National Endowment for the Humanities
Onion Foundation

Gifts from Individuals

Donors to the MHC generously supported our statewide humanities programming through the following funds: the Annual Fund, Readers Retreat, the MHC Book Fund, program-specific support, and the Dorothy Schwartz Opportunity Fund. This list includes gifts made during our 2021 fiscal year: between November 1, 2020, and October 31, 2021. The asterisk recognizes sponsors of Readers Retreat.

MHC Circle (\$5,000+)

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MHC Circle (\$2,500 - \$4,999)

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Peter and Margie Webster*

MHC Circle (\$1,000 - \$2,499)

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In memory of Harriet P. Henry on what would have been her 98th birthday

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THE STATE OF OUR STORY 2021

During Fiscal Year 2021, the Maine Humanities Council had operating income of \$1,632,625 and operating expenses of \$1,608,312. 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 Maine Humanities Council's audited financial statements include in-kind contributions of time, mileage, and materials, valued at \$146,883.

REVENUES 2020 — 2021

National Endowment for the Humanities	\$978,700.00
State of Maine Funding	\$54,800.00
Contributions and Grants	\$145,498.00
In-kind Contributions	\$146,883.00
Program, Investment, and Other Income	\$306,744.00

TOTAL **\$1,632,625.00**

EXPENSES 2020 — 2021

Programs, Re grants, and Technical Assistance	\$1,267,637.00
Administration	\$124,194.00
Fundraising & Marketing	\$216,481.00

TOTAL **\$1,608,312.00**