Big Ideas in Little Books

Prime Time Family Reading brings discussion and family bonding to local libraries

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NEW PROGRAMS FOR 2014 SET TO FOSTER LIFELONG LEARNING, GOOD CITIZENSHIP

In honor of Humanities Washington’s 40th Anniversary, Executive Director Julie Ziegler announces three new programs

By Julie Ziegler | Humanities Washington executive director

As our world grows ever more complex, we are asked to make increasingly difficult choices. From where we buy our food to how we vote on state initiatives, our decisions are influenced by a whirlwind of factors and can have profound global impacts. But how are we to inform ourselves and to be good citizens?

Now, more than ever, we must work to preserve a society that values the lifelong pursuit of knowledge.

In an age of sound bites, the humanities give us a chance to go deeper — to examine a topic from multiple viewpoints, to share complex stories of our past, to express our values, our concerns and our triumphs. The humanities also help us hone our abstract thinking, reasoning and creative impulses, inspiring new thought that can propel us forward as individuals and as a people. These skills aid us in our work and personal lives, enabling us to continually improve. The health of our democracy, of our free institutions, depends on a citizenry that values and prioritizes learning, that actively seeks out different perspectives and discusses constructively.

Every day, I meet Washingtonians who are committed to building community and to upholding the humanities. Our state is full of people striving to better their neighborhoods and to better understand their neighbors. Humanities Washington is honored to serve this state, providing broad access to educational opportunities...
in the most rural and urban areas of the state and everywhere in between.

In 2014, as we mark Humanities Washington’s 40th anniversary, our board and staff are reflecting on the past and looking forward (as any organization committed to lifelong learning should!), and we are thrilled to draw your attention to three key initiatives you’ll see unfold in the coming year: *40 Years of Washington Stories*; the unveiling of a new grant opportunity, the *Washington Stories Fund*; and dramatic expansion of our *Prime Time Family Reading* program.

All anniversary celebrations should include an opportunity to reminisce, and Humanities Washington is pleased to do this with *40 Years of Washington Stories*, a look back at the terrific partners with whom we’ve worked and the projects we’ve undertaken over the years. On our blog, *SparkMag.org*, we’ll feature a series of snapshots from our past, sharing stories that have helped shape the humanities in Washington state. To receive updates on this series and news from Humanities Washington, visit *SparkMag.org* and subscribe under “Get Spark via Email.”

With an eye to encouraging another 40 years of great storytelling, we’ve created the *Washington Stories Fund*, a new grant opportunity to encourage documentation and distribution of the little-known stories of people or groups whose contributions add to the cultural richness of our state. Unfortunately, because of cultural, economic and geographic barriers, most of us don’t experience the stories of those outside our social and professional circles. The Washington Stories Fund will provide critical funding to help local cultural organizations share these stories, cast constructive new light on current issues, nurture compassion and understanding, and—we hope—seed civic action. Our first Washington Stories Fund recipient will be announced in the fall.

In 2014, we will also dedicate significant resources to accommodate the rapidly growing demand for our *Prime Time Family Reading* program. Prime Time uses reading, storytelling and group discussion to build the reading skills of elementary school students as they explore cultural and ethical themes in children’s literature. (For more on *Prime Time Family Reading*, see our story on page 7.) This spring, thanks to funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, The Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, the Wockner Foundation and other private funders, we will triple our reach with new partnerships in Port Townsend, Kennewick, Spokane, Mukilteo and Monroe. We also plan to train additional professionals this spring so we may continue to expand across the state.

None of this work in 2014, or the 40 years preceding it, could have been accomplished without YOU. Thank you for your partnership and financial support, both during our 2014 fall fundraising appeal and before. It is because of you that we’re able to continue to evolve to meet the changing needs of our state. You are an essential part of our state’s thriving cultural community.

For the past 40 years, it’s been an honor to be a part of a community that so strongly values the humanities. We look forward to another 40, and thank you for helping to make that possible!

With sincere appreciation,

Julie Ziegler, Executive Director

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More Online

Sign up for *Spark 5*, our monthly e-newsletter: [humanities.org/signup](http://humanities.org/signup)
Marlon Brando gave an iconic performance as Vito Corleone in The Godfather, based on the 1969 novel of the same name by Mario Puzo. Horton describes the story as “a potboiler as a book, but pretty highly esteemed as a movie.”

Gregory Peck as attorney Atticus Finch in the 1962 film adaptation of Harper Lee’s To Kill a Mockingbird, a movie that adheres closely to the original book.

FROM THE PAGE TO THE BIG SCREEN

Movie critic Robert Horton on adaptations from The Godfather to The Lord of the Rings and more

By Abby Rhinehart | Humanities Washington communications officer

Robert Horton says books can have a second life — and a third, and a fourth — through film adaptations.

Each adaptation, the movie critic says, reflects its times. “If you look at (the adaptation of) Anna Karenina in the 1940s, you see a tragic tale tinged by an era of war,” he says. “If you see the 2012 version, you see a postmodern take that doesn’t quite believe in its own fated love story.”

Horton is a film critic for The Herald (Everett) and KUOW. He also travels the state as part of the Humanities Washington Speakers Bureau, a roster of 29 cultural experts and scholars that provides low-cost, high-quality public presentations across the state. His talk, The Movie Mashup: Wild Literary Adaptations on Film, is part of the new slate of Speakers Bureau presentations available in 2014 (see page 6 for more on the new Speakers Bureau topics).

Horton shared his thoughts on the wide variety of book-to-movie adaptations.

Humanities Washington: What do you think are some of the more interesting adaptations out there?

Robert Horton: Some of the most interesting are books that were not classics to begin with — in fact it’s a near-truism that great books don’t make very good movies, but great movies can often come from middling books. The Godfather is a potboiler as a book, but pretty highly esteemed as a movie. So that’s a rule of thumb to keep in mind.

But there are no real rules when it comes to adaptation: You can get good movies by sticking close to the book, as with The Maltese Falcon or To Kill a Mockingbird, and you
can get good movies by coming up with something entirely new. A couple of the films in my (Humanities Washington) talk, for instance, are hardly recognizable in their sources: the sci-fi classic *Forbidden Planet*, which is ingeniously inspired by Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, and the beautiful 1943 horror film *I Walked with a Zombie*, which uses *Jane Eyre* as its core idea but then creates its own world beyond that story. Certainly *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy is an impressive attempt to contain a sprawling epic, in which much is cut out despite over 10 hours of movie time.

But the basic thing is that a movie has to find a way to translate the essential mood, feel, idea of the source into film language, which is an entirely different animal than literature. Of course, I’m covering some of the crazier adaptations (in my talk), so I include *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, which is supposedly based on *The Odyssey* by Homer. And it sort of is, but it’s fun to see what the connections are. What’s truly exciting is when a first-rate artist takes a classic and then completely re-imagines it: French filmmaker Claire Denis transplanted (Herman) Melville’s seafaring tale *Billy Budd* and set it in the North African desert. That film, *Beau Travail*, is a classic of its own.

**HW: How does having read the source material affect how we watch an adaptation?**

**Horton:** For most of us, I think it’s quite powerful. If I’ve read a book, I do my best to forget preconceived notions, but, let’s face it—we all “see” a book as we’re reading it, sometimes right down to casting the main roles in our heads. Sometimes I’ve had to watch a movie a second time to see how good it is, just to be able to shake off my own vision of the thing. These days, if I’m going to see a movie adaptation, I will usually avoid reading the book before I see it, so I can go in cold.

**HW:** In 1924, Erich von Stroheim famously tried to do a complete, literal remake of the novel *McTeague*. The resulting film, *Greed*, was over nine hours long. Most movies cut something from the book. So what tends to get left out and why?

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**“The basic thing is that a movie has to find a way to translate the essential mood, feel, idea of the source into film language, which is an entirely different animal than literature.”**

—Film Critic Robert Horton
despite the fact that no one would ever see it on camera, so that might’ve had something to do with Greed’s original length.

HW: Director David Cronenberg said, in an interview about his adaptation of Don DeLillo’s Cosmopolis, “You have to betray the book in order to be faithful to the book.” 2. What do you think Cronenberg means?

Horton: He’s right. Because of the need to make a movie breathe with its own kind of energy and language, everything should be rethought. The goal would be to catch the spirit of the book, not every character or scene. That can be difficult for authors to accept; Stephen King disliked Stanley Kubrick’s adaptation of The Shining, but The Shining’s an amazing movie in a way the book can’t touch.

HW: Why do filmmakers tackle seemingly unadaptable books, like In Search of Lost Time: The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman; or Mrs Dalloway? And how are some able to, against all odds, make a solid adaptation?

Horton: Maybe it’s the challenge, or maybe the filmmaker is so in love with the material that it blinds him or her to how hard it would be to adapt that literary property.

Some ideas are absurd by their very nature: It’s a Wonderful Life is based on a brief Christmas card, and so the screenplay was an almost entirely new invention (which worked out pretty darned well). Roger Corman made a whole string of movies based on very short (Edgar Allen Poe stories or poems, which pretty much meant concocting an original story. For titles that truly seem unadaptable, I think some radical approach is probably called for. In my talk, I’ll cover The French Lieutenant’s Woman, by John Fowles, which has a plot like a conventional nineteenth-century novel but is written in a modern style that comments on its own story — complete with three different endings! For the movie, screenwriter Harold Pinter decided to make it about a movie company filming The French Lieutenant’s Woman — so the whole thing operated on a couple of different levels, in an attempt to do what Fowles had done with his literary style. Michael Winterbottom’s film of Tristram Shandy tried a similar sort of approach.

But I actually do believe some books are better left on the page. The Great Gatsby depends so much on the sound and rhythm of (F. Scott) Fitzgerald’s prose, it translates poorly to the screen — at least when Baz Luhrmann tries it.

For more information, visit humanities.org/speakers

JOIN THE SPEAKERS BUREAU

Humanities Washington seeks applicants for the 2015–16 Speakers Bureau. For more information, see page 23.
BIG IDEAS
IN LITTLE BOOKS

Prime Time Family Reading sparks discussion and family bonding in local libraries

By Abby Rhinehart  |  Humanities Washington communications officer

If you lost everything, what would you miss most?

That was one question, of many, that families tackled at the Spokane Valley Library last fall. That evening, they had read the picture book *A Chair for My Mother*, the story of a family who comes together after losing everything in a house fire to save their money for a comfortable armchair. The slim children’s book prompted families to discuss what they valued most and sparked the question: What would you buy if your family was going to save money together?

One family remarked that they’d buy a six-person bike to take rides together, said Spokane Valley Librarian Aileen Luppert.

Another little boy said, “I’d like to save my money to get my sister here from Mexico.”

These families had gathered as part of the Prime Time Family Reading program, held at libraries around the state and sponsored by Humanities Washington. Struggling readers between the ages of six and ten take home books each week and read them with their families. Then the families come together weekly at the library for a meal, storytelling session and thoughtful discussion of the themes presented in the books.

Prime Time conversations go in whatever direction families choose. As Walla Walla Library Storyteller Janice King sees it, the conversation leaders are “the catalyst for the community discussion,” rather than lecturers or dispensers of knowledge.
In Walla Walla, families took their discussion on *A Chair for My Mother* in a different direction, asking, “Whose responsibility is it to take care of a family if their house burns down?” King remembers, “One boy, I think he was six, got out of his chair and said, ‘It is everybody’s responsibility.’”

This year will be one of massive expansion for Prime Time in our state. This spring, Humanities Washington will launch new family reading sessions in Port Townsend, Kennewick, Spokane County, Mukilteo and Monroe. It will also hold a training workshop this spring and plans to hold additional sessions in the fall. Support from individual donors, The Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, the Wockner Foundation and OneFamily Foundation makes this expansion possible. Prime Time began 23 years ago with the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, as it set out to address intergenerational illiteracy; in 2012, Humanities Washington decided to bring the curriculum to Washington state.

“What I like about this program is, in addition to encouraging kids to read for pleasure, the kids have a chance to reflect on these books, how they relate to their lives, and on cultural and ethical themes,” said Ellen Terry, program director for Humanities Washington.

At the Lynnwood Library in 2012, Terry said, “One of the sessions was on *Fanny’s Dream*, so there was a spirited discussion about dreams, with questions like: What does happily ever after look like? What does it look like in a fairy tale, and what

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“It’s a time of listening and sharing rather than instructing and learning … it puts everyone on equal footing … and I think that that empowers children — and adults as well.”

—Prime Time Storyteller Janice King, Walla Walla

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does it look like in real life? What does a happy life look like? And if you have dreams as a child, do they change?”

Conversations don’t just take place in the libraries. One parent at the Shadle Library in Spokane said that after attending Prime Time, when she and her child read at home, “Now we talk more in-depth; (we’re) not just reading the stories, but (also) focusing on the deeper questions in the books.”

Another child, at the Shadle Library session, said, “I like it because my mom usually gets home at six and watches TV, (but) now we read together.”

The program’s impacts extend beyond its six-week session, as participants become more comfortable using the library. “I went in (to the Walla Walla Library) the other night to check out some things, and one of the families was there checking out – I am not exaggerating – 15 books,” said King.

That impact is set to make kids into lifelong learners. “You get the sense that if you have a library card, you get to find out what you want to know, not what other people want you to know,” King continued. “You get to say what you want to say, and not what other people want you to say.”

Last fall at the Spokane County Library, scholar Tod Marshall made the final evening’s graduation ceremony a special treat. Marshall, who teaches English at Gonzaga University, wore his cap and gown as he handed out diplomas and T-shirts to graduates of the program.

“It’s a time of listening and sharing rather than instructing and learning,” King said. “What I really like about this program is that it puts everyone on equal footing … and I think that that empowers children – and adults as well.”

MORE ONLINE
For more on Prime Time Family Reading, including sites for the program this spring, visit humanities.org/reading.
Elizabeth Austen feared letting her poetry loose in public, until she realized she was just its channel.

A stage actor for years before turning wholesale to the written word, the Seattle poet never endured stage fright when speaking lines from other writers. It was only her own work that scared her when she tried to give it voice.

“My mouth would go dry, my knees would shake, and it troubled me,” says Austen. “I couldn’t figure out why it was so completely different to perform my own work.”

Then, an epiphany — one of a handful that have guided Austen to her appointment this year as the 2014–16 Washington State Poet Laureate: “It’s not about me,” she says. “I’m not the point. The point is the experience the audience has, and I’m only fifty percent of that.”

Named to the laureateship in February to succeed Kathleen Flenniken, Austen assumed the role of state ambassador for poetry, traveling the state with public readings and workshops to build awareness and appreciation of poetry in Washington.

Austen has been familiar to listeners of Seattle’s KUOW as producer and voice of the public station’s poetry segments for thirteen years. There, she’s shared and analyzed the work of contemporary Northwest verse artists like Alice Derry, Christine Deavel, Derek Sheffield and others.

Now an advocate of the poem in several media — on the page, on the stage, on the radio — Austen has learned to see herself as just one more of those media. Poetry is an interaction between poet and reader, after all, and poetry aloud entwines the reader with the listener.

“Performance requires you, but it’s not about you,” she says. “And that really liberated me to understand that my job was to be the instrument that introduced the poems into the room, but the audience had a job as well … Every audience member experiences a slightly different poem, because of where they are.”

Perhaps the best example from Austen’s own work is “The Girl Who Goes Alone,” from her 2011 collected volume Every Dress a
At Freehold, Austen had written a trio of poems that turned into a dance theater piece. “I think that was where the light really came on for me, of poetry as something powerful,” she says, and when she returned to Seattle from her walkabout, that was where she invested her energy.

She took up serious academic study of the form in master of fine arts studies at Antioch University in Los Angeles, and, managing director for Freehold Theatre, a nonprofit acting studio.

Then came one of those epiphanies. At about age 30, Austen dropped everything and bought a one-way ticket to Quito, Ecuador. (Among the things she took with her was Mary Oliver’s poem “Wild Geese,” with its opening admonition, “You do not have to be good.”) It was a walkabout across the South American terrain — like that undertaken in “The Girl Who Goes Alone” — to center herself and figure out how she could become the author of her own life.

“When you’re an actor, unless you’re generating your own material, you’re always in service of someone else’s vision or expression,” she says. “And that can be an amazing and beautiful thing. But part of the reason why I left theater is I got really tired of not being the one who was generating the material.”

“We have lost something by offloading the arts onto people who make it their professions, and to reclaim the making of art as something that is deeply pleasurable, that is social, that is a conduit to a deeper connection not only to the self, but each other — that feels very urgent to me.”

— Elizabeth Austen, 2014–16 Washington State Poet Laureate

Despite her background in theater, Austen had trouble reading her own poems aloud, at first. But now, Austen has overcome that stage fright and brings her acting skills to her poetry. | Photo by John Ulman

Austen grew up in southern California, raised in the Catholic Church — an upbringing she now says contributed to her sense of the power of language. Acting summoned her, and she worked onstage and behind the scenes on sojourns living in England, New Jersey and Dallas.

Austen moved to Seattle, sight unseen, in 1989 and immediately felt at home both in the city and its theater scene, working with Book-It Repertory Theatre and the Seattle Shakespeare Company. She soon became

Austen released a collection of poetry, Every Dress A Decision, with Blue Begonia Press in 2011.

Every Dress A Decision

Elizabeth Austen

Decision. Read onstage, it becomes a seven-minute travelogue of the risks a woman must take — or is told she must take, by the men and authority figures in her life — when going unaccompanied into the world. And every reading yields some new response from a listener.

“What I’ve been amazed at when I’ve performed that piece is how often it’s men who come up and talk to me after, and tell me how the poem has helped them understand more what it means to be a woman,” she says.

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while there, netted the KUOW internship that led to her ongoing role at the station. The poems she went on to create are concerned with freezing moments and turning them over in the hand (“Not Yet,” “Humans”), as well as exploring what place people have in the world.

And more specifically, she studies the place of women. Even the title of Austen’s 2011 collection from Blue Begonia Press, Every Dress a Decision, queries the expectations and conditions placed on a woman. Poems like “Problem Was” are both reflections and warnings against letting a man determine one’s value:

“The more he talked —
his litany of needs, the catalog of my flaws,
the chronicle
of his disappointments — it became a kind
of lullaby, soporific,
setting me adrift on the tundra ...”

Austen’s poems first arrived in chapbook form in 2010 from Floating Bridge Press with The Girl Who Goes Alone, featuring an earlier version of the title poem, and with the work of other poets in Sightline, from Toadlily Press. Published the next year, Every Dress a Decision went on to become a finalist for the 2012 Washington State Book Award in poetry.

She’s also found ways to weave poetry into her work as online content strategist for Seattle Children’s Hospital, where she hosts workshops for fellow staff. In her two-year term as Washington State Poet Laureate, Austen hopes to bring poetry to adult audiences and participants, hosting such workshops and discussions at local libraries and tribal centers throughout the state.

“Really, the biggest challenge with teaching poetry to adults is that by the time we come to adulthood, we have all been pretty much acculturated to stop doing things we may think we’re not good at,” Austen says. “... My strong belief is that we have lost something by offloading the arts onto people who make it their professions, and to reclaim the making of art as something that is deeply pleasurable, that is social, that is a conduit to a deeper connection not only to the self, but each other — that feels very urgent to me.”

Mist-colored knots of sea glass. A moss-clot cadged from the trail’s edge. The truce fished word by word from beneath the surface, still unspoken. We carry what we found what we made there. Three days you and I let the currents direct our course, slept on cool sand, let woodsmoke flavor us.

What’s left? Slow travel over cold water. Toward home and days ordered by clocks instead of tides. We watch through salt-scarred windows, hoping the dark shapes will rise beside us, will grace us. We know too well what can’t be willed, only missed if we look away too soon.
come spring’s end, Gwendolyn Haley hopes Spokane County residents will have a new view on their community. A sepia-toned view, maybe a little dusty, like a Dorothea Lange portrait.

Haley, a library services manager with the Spokane County Library District, wants to project her patrons back through the decades with *Hope In Hard Times*, the traveling exhibit about Washington in the Great Depression that lands at the North Spokane branch April 12.

Once they’ve walked through the paneled exhibit, which will take up part of the library’s main floor, perhaps visitors will seek out the places where Depression history underlies the Spokane of today.

“At Riverside State Park, there was a Civilian Conservation Corps camp,” says Haley. “That’s exciting, to think about people making connections with their own community’s past.”

Gwen Whiting, the Washington State Historical Society education specialist who curated the exhibit, wouldn’t have it any other way.

“This is such a personal history,” Whiting says. “Sometimes studying history, you talk about these periods that are very disconnected from people — but everybody has a Depression story.”

*Hope in Hard Times: Washington During the Great Depression* is a 10-panel exhibit developed by the Washington State Historical Society and toured around the state by Humanities Washington. The exhibit will visit eight sites from 2013–15, having already visited Clarkston, Port Townsend,
Naselle and Burien. The exhibit will be on display in Walla Walla at The Kirkman House Museum until April 6.

The Great Depression, the worldwide economic collapse that gripped the United States from 1929 to 1939, was particularly transformative in Washington. When it began, much of the central state was arid and tough to farm; by its end, the Grand Coulee Dam was channeling irrigation water throughout the Columbia Basin. Decades of Republican Party dominance collapsed in tandem with Herbert Hoover’s presidential administration, yielding a succession of Democratic governors and legislative majorities.

When Whiting began her research in 2009 for the original incarnation of the exhibit at the Washington State History Museum in Tacoma, she found the state had reacted to the Depression not with panic, but much like the proverbial frog in a slowly heating kettle.

“You kind of associate the Depression with the stock market crash (in October 1929), and the image your mind always goes to is: immediate hard times.”

“We wanted to tell the story of the Great Depression not as this overarching story, which is a pretty dark story, with not a lot of bright spots. We wanted to point out who the regular, everyday people were that were living it.”

—Gwen Whiting, Curator, Washington State Historical Society
Instead, Washington seemed to live in denial, with *The Seattle Times* waving away the bad news with a large headline reading “NO DEPRESSION.” But in truth, the state was suffering economically even before the stock market crash due to declines in its agriculture and timber industries. The end of World War I had shrunk the market for most of Washington’s exports, and it lacked large-scale manufacturing to develop new goods. Because our state was already in a downturn, the initial effects of the Great Depression were less apparent.

Actual job losses were slow in the immediate wake of the crash, but at the Depression’s lowest point, more than a quarter of Washingtonians found themselves without a source of income. Bank failures grew so widespread and crushing that the Chamber of Commerce in Tenino began minting its own redeemable currency, “Tenino scrip,” putting some $10,000 in paper money and, famously, wooden tablets into circulation from 1932 to 1933.

As in other states, federal job creation programs moved in to provide relief. Public works projects in the state included the Deception Pass Bridge and the Lake Washington Floating Bridge (which now carries I-90), ultimately putting 54,000 people in the state back to work. Building the dam at Grand Coulee — which would eventually give power to the state’s new aluminum smelting industry — required the work of about 8,000 people over its nine-year construction.

But in the meantime, unemployment and homelessness lingered, giving rise to the ad-hoc societies of “Hoovervilles.” These temporary shantytowns sprung up nationwide, but Seattle’s nine-acre settlement was the first, and perhaps the most durable. The community was built from wood rather than cardboard, lasted from 1931 to 1941, and found ways to serve its residents where local and federal authorities failed.

“You had unemployed men building a town, building a community, and instituting real reforms in that community,” Whiting says. At one point, “Hooverville Seattle was actually trying to build a college.”

History echoed around Whiting as her work on the exhibit progressed. She began researching *Hope in Hard Times* during a state funding crunch that saw threats to defund the Washington State Historical Society and its associated museum. She pressed on, uncertain if she’d still be employed to see the exhibit through.

As her work continued through 2011, the Occupy movement spread, with activists and the disenfranchised taking up Hooverville-style residence in public places nationwide. Tacoma’s own Occupy forces based themselves in Don Pugnetti Park, literally next door to Whiting’s museum workspace.

So the time proved right, in a national economic downturn, to talk about Washington’s past experiences with the same phenomenon. Visitors to the exhibit at the Washington State Historical Museum wrote their own memories or thoughts on the Depression period on a public bulletin board and even responded to each other’s postings. One child wrote of hard times affecting the family; another visitor wrote back, consolingly, “Things will get better.”

The exhibit has retained that intimate, individual touch as it travels. Community members at the five sites to host the exhibit so far have built local displays with heirlooms and documents relating to their communities, and events organized around *Hope in Hard Times* have elevated each town’s own struggles in the Depression.

In Clarkston, the Asotin County Library put on a “Be a Time Traveler Day” with a radio show and puzzle involving

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*Unemployed Resist Eviction of Family,* by Ronald Debs Ginther in 1931. Though not professionally trained, Ginther painted scenes of the Depression that he witnessed firsthand as he wandered the Pacific Northwest looking for work.
symbols historically used by hobos. In Port Townsend, the Jefferson County Historical Society hosted a discussion on the films of the 1930s. In Naselle, the Appelo Archive Center focused on the region’s roots as a logging community and partnered with the local library. In Burien, the Highline Historical Society held a car show featuring 1930s automobiles and scheduled workshops on family history and genealogy.

At the Spokane County Library, volunteers have contributed family heirlooms from the region, like toys, an antique radio and reading material. Haley says, “I actually found some sheet music from the 1930s that had belonged to my grandfather, who was a professional musician.”

The Spokane exhibit isn’t just limited to the display in the North Spokane Library; the library district is holding events and outreach throughout the county. Locally organized doings include programs of Depression-era music and speaking engagements at all 10 county libraries, plus showings of the Ken Burns PBS miniseries *The Dust Bowl* and a visit from Northwest journalist Timothy Egan, author of the National Book Award-winning Dust Bowl history *The Worst Hard Time*.

“Although we have this basic text (of the core traveling exhibit) for people to follow as a road map, the exhibit can be completely different and unique to any community,” Whiting says.

The big picture of history, she’s found, is really made of many, many small pictures.

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**YOU CAN GO**

*Hope in Hard Times: Washington During the Great Depression* is a traveling exhibit exploring the adversity and triumph of everyday Americans during the 1930s, comparing the struggles of the era to those faced today.

**Upcoming Exhibit Locations & Dates:**

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<td>The Kirkman House Museum</td>
<td>214 N. Colville St.</td>
<td>Jan. 17 – Apr. 6, 2014</td>
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<td>Walla Walla, WA 99362</td>
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<td>North Spokane Library</td>
<td>44 E. Hawthorne Rd.</td>
<td>Apr. 12 – June 30, 2014</td>
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**More Online**

For the latest on Humanities Washington’s Traveling Exhibit, visit: [humanities.org/exhibits](http://humanities.org/exhibits)
People congregated in the crowded bar, talking animatedly over craft beers at Seattle’s Naked City Brewery & Taphouse last December. Many were excited about their holiday shopping. But they weren’t just there for the beer and the good company.

The crowd had gathered for ‘Tis the Season: Holiday Shopping and the American Consumer Culture, a Humanities Washington Think & Drink event with University of Washington history professor Linda Nash and Seattle University economist Meenakshi Rishi, moderated by KUOW’s Steve Scher. The event used the holiday shopping season as a jumping-off point to ask: How did America become a consumer culture? And how does our consumption affect the economy — and our community?

People had gathered not just to drink, but to think — to think about how their choices are influenced by our culture and affect the economy.

To begin the conversation, Scher asked Nash and Rishi how the United States had developed into a consumer society.

“One powerful way to assimilate has been to join the consumption frenzy,”
responded Nash. As immigrants poured into our country in the nineteenth century, she said, many groups were anxious to assimilate. They could do so through language or work, but both of those were fairly difficult to attain, as language learning takes time and jobs were often segregated. Or they could assimilate through consumption — by buying and wearing fashionable “American” goods. With enough money, anyone could dress like a native-born American.

At the same time, department stores became a safe place for women to congregate outside the home, said Nash, and young people found places to socialize freely in stores and cafes. “Today it might be the mall, but back then it might’ve been Coney Island,” added Nash.

The conversation moved to the tradition of gift-giving in the holiday season. Nash recounted how the practice grew after the Civil War, as the image of Santa Claus was popularized by a retailer. And as immigrant groups began to assimilate, they also began to tie gift-giving to their own holidays, like Hanukkah. Rishi added that this trend has only increased with globalization, recounting that her relatives in India now give gifts not just for Diwali, but also for Hanukkah, Christmas, Valentine’s Day and more.

After the conversation got going, the audience began to chime in.

“Is consumerism a bad word or just an economic term?” one attendee asked.

Rishi took a strong stance. “I don’t think spending is bad at all,” she said. “The economic model is driven by consumer spending. Whether you choose to have five computers, or ten computers, it’s your choice … The economic model says more is better than less. (But) do I believe in (that model)? No.”

Nash said, “Historians know that the past never repeats itself … We’ve kind of been lulled into a sense that the sort of American ascendancy (in the mid-twentieth century), when America was at the height of its power (and) was globally dominant … we think that that moment is going to continue to repeat itself, but that was a unique historical moment, and it’s over.”

The discussion continued, jumping from the proposed $15 minimum wage to the environmental impact of consumption and more. (To listen to the full audio of the event, visit SparkMag.org/tag/ConsumerismThink&Drink.)

Animated discussions continued at tables around the bar after the formal program had ended. Nash and Rishi mingled with attendees, casually dropping in on conversations.

“What makes me a regular fan (OK … a groupie) of Think and Drink? Mix together time with family and friends, stimulating topics of conversation (often continuing after the event for days) and provocative panelists … Serve it up with some great Naked City beer and you’ve got a sense of place, a community gathering, reminiscent of coffee klatches and diners.”

— Marcy Wynhoff, Seattle-based teacher

Even after the event is over, participants stick around and keep the discussion going at a Think & Drink in Seattle in 2011.
The event was one of 13 Think & Drinks that Humanities Washington put on last year. Program manager Zaki Abdelhamid said, “Think & Drink brings the humanities to people where they already gather, sparking conversations on provocative topics in an environment that is conducive to open discussion, even on topics that might otherwise be uncomfortable to tackle.”

Think & Drink began in Seattle in 2011 with an event on Prohibition, corresponding with the release of the Ken Burns documentary on the subject. Since then, the program has expanded to Tacoma, Yakima and Spokane. Past events have tackled current issues ranging from negative campaigning (during the 2012 election) to marijuana legalization (when I-522 was on the ballot). Other Think & Drink events have tackled more long-standing concerns, like the growth of technology or the American healthcare system. The idea for Think & Drink came from Oregon Humanities, which holds similar events in Portland.

In 2014, Humanities Washington will take a different tack with the program and offer a series of events, all centered on a theme: race, place and class. Individual events will look at different aspects of these issues in our state, from the racial divide in schools to our state’s role in national and international civil rights movements.

“What makes me a regular fan (OK ... a groupie) of Think and Drink?” asked Marcy Wynhoff, a Seattle-based teacher. “Mix together time with family and friends, stimulating topics of conversation (often continuing after the event for days) and provocative panelists. Then throw in KUOW’s Ross Reynolds, Steve Scher or Marcie Silman. Serve it up with some great Naked City beer and you’ve got a sense of place, a community gathering, reminiscent of coffee klatches and diners.”

“Washington is a state rich with diversity and cultures from all over the world,” said Abdelhamid. “With that diversity comes a responsibility on our behalf to address the topics that affect the different cultures that make up our communities. I look forward to having these conversations and learning from the citizens of our great state.”

You can go

Think & Drinks are offered at four locations around the state:

**Seattle**
Naked City Brewery & Taphouse
8564 Greenwood Ave. N.
Seattle, WA 98103

**Spokane**
Lindaman’s Gourmet Bistro
1235 S. Grand Blvd.
Spokane, WA 99202

**Tacoma**
Engine House No. 9
611 N. Pine St.
Tacoma, WA 98406

**Yakima**
Gilbert Cellars Tasting Room
5 N. Front St.
Yakima, WA 98901

Listen to the Think & Drink ’Tis the Season: Holiday Shopping and the American Consumer Culture: sparkmag.org/tag/consumerism-think-and-drink

For think & drink events: humanities.org/think-drink

Above: Conversation continues after the event at a Think & Drink at Naked City Brewery & Taphouse in 2011.
The tears were perhaps inevitable. Though the snuffling and clenched tissues were probably not the best gauges of understanding, they did at least indicate we had arrived at a rather uncomfortable moment.

The final night of the Native American History and Culture Symposium at Washington State University Vancouver in March 2013 demonstrated the distance we had traveled in four days. Our central subject, federal recognition, was perhaps a less obviously emotional issue than Indian boarding schools, our topic in past years. However, focusing on federal recognition, with the support of a Humanities Washington Spark Grant, actually enabled us to continue a trajectory into even more local, immediate and controversial issues.

The federal government’s official recognition of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe and the Chinook Indian Nation’s ongoing quest for the same have shaped the regional politics of Southwest Washington. Issues from salmon recovery to coal terminal proposals have made tribes major players in the environmental arena as well. Fisheries management, casino proposals and poorly understood tribal rights and histories have all contributed to ongoing conflict among tribes and between members of our communities. It is a fight that mostly plays out in court cases and newspapers, presented with little historical context or public discussion.

Over the course of our symposia at Washington State University Vancouver, we have sought to understand this conflict and have highlighted the presence of Native Americans in our community through history, anthropology, literature, music, psychology and film. We have asked how the experiences and images of Native Americans have shaped our community and have sought to better understand the ninth-largest urban Native American population in the United States using the humanities.

This past year, we took a major step: We went from inviting people from local tribes and organizations to participate to moving them to the center stage. “Tell us what an audience needs to know,” we told them. And they did.

We invited Yakama, Cowlitz and Chinook tribal elders and council members to help explore effects of federal recognition. For three evenings in early March, they had carte blanche to inform an audience about what recognition and their relationship with the federal government meant to them. The events were born out of many partnerships, with Professor Katrine Barber and students from Portland State University; tribal elders and council members Johnson Meninick (Yakama), Mike Iyall (Cowlitz) and Tony Johnson (Chinook); legal commentator Robert Miller (Lewis and Clark Law School); and historical commentator Andrew Fisher (College of William and Mary).

The first night began with members of the Yakama Tribe describing the effect of federal recognition on their cultural history. The Treaty of 1855, establishing the relationship between the tribe and the United States, centers on the rights of
continued access to hunting, fishing and gathering places, and because of this, the very identity of Yakama peoples is rooted in those rights and the land.

The second evening began as members of the Cowlitz Tribe told a quite different story of their long struggle for recognition and what their tribe has been able to accomplish in the decade since they gained it. The ability to apply for federal grants has enabled the Cowlitz Tribe to extend health care, housing and transportation to tribal members and the surrounding communities.

The third night brought the story of the brief months of Chinook Tribal recognition and the sudden reversal of that decision in 2001. To kick off the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the Bush administration featured the Chinook Tribe alongside others in a White House luncheon. A lame duck Clinton administration had extended recognition to them only the year before, based in part on the tribe’s history since the winter of 1805–06 when it helped Lewis and Clark’s Corps of Discovery survive. Two days later, while tribal representatives were still in the capital, the announcement came that the Chinook Tribe had been “unrecognized.” The arbitrary decision meant loss of access to health and loan programs and, perhaps more importantly, loss of the acknowledgement that Chinooks were who they said they were.

Each evening, after the presentation, we gathered around tables for family-style meals and intimate group conversations, meeting people face-to-face, asking questions and explaining views. Over a shared dinner, student facilitators and tribal members led open discussions about culture, knowledge, education, psychology, economics and politics. Getting to know each other as individuals brought home how much the daily experiences of Native Americans living in Southwest Washington depend on the legacies of the past. Treaties negotiated but not ratified, recognition granted and revoked, and the ongoing complications of tribal politics all demonstrated that history is clearly not past.

By the time we arrived at our fourth evening, all understood that there were still entire worlds left to explore and appreciate. Several students and community members have since approached me to ask what they can do to further understanding. Tribal members have repeatedly expressed appreciation for the opportunity to tell their stories and hopes that we can continue to collaborate. Attendees agreed that without civil discussion and the respectful consideration of stories, we have little hope for progress.

Washington State University Vancouver has taken up that challenge and has been reaching out to tribes and Native American organizations to actively explore how these communities and the university can mutually benefit from ongoing collaboration. The conversations on Native American involvement in the school, begun around humanities, have since extended into the sciences, business, engineering, nursing and education. Expanding our relationship with the Cowlitz Tribe, discussing how we might better serve one of our largest minority student populations, and reaching out to Native American communities in Oregon and Washington are all simultaneous long-term efforts, the results of humanities-based discussion. They speak to the power of the humanities to spark tough conversations, build relationships and, ultimately, make change.

It may result in discomfort or even tears, but it is time for all of us to begin talking with, working alongside, and listening to our neighbors.

“Treaties negotiated but not ratified, recognition granted and revoked, and the ongoing complications of tribal politics all demonstrated that history is clearly not past.”

— Steven Fountain, WSU Vancouver history professor

Steven Fountain is professor of history at Washington State University Vancouver, where he teaches classes on early American history, environmental history, the American West and Native American history. He is an affiliate of the Plateau Center for American Indian Studies in Pullman and is a 2013–14 Washington State University Vancouver Faculty Diversity Fellow, working to increase cooperation and collaboration with Native American communities in Western Washington.
JOIN US!

A selection of upcoming Humanities Washington events

March 14–30
THE KENTUCKY CYCLE
BAINBRIDGE ISLAND – This sweeping epic of three families in eastern Kentucky spans 200 years of American history, from 1775 to 1975. Bainbridge Performing Arts will put on outreach events around the play, including round-table conversations and film and book tie-ins.

March 22–23
SEQUENTIAL REACTION: A HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN COMIC BOOK
LYNDEN, BELLINGHAM, FERNDALE – This interactive, multimedia presentation will trace the history of comic books, from their Golden Age in the 1930s and '40s to the digital revolution of today. Journalist and comic-book historian Andrew Wahl will lead us in a conversation about the history of comic books as an art form, an industry, and a lens for exploring American culture.

April 17
FIRE AND FORESTS, EAST OF THE CASCADE DIVIDE
ROSLYN – Photographer John Marshall will lead a discussion on the past philosophies and future policies regarding forest fire management in Eastern Washington. All of Eastern Washington’s vulnerable forests will inevitably burn. The question for us is: How do we want them to burn?

May 15
MAPPING LATINO MUSICAL MIGRATIONS
RICHLAND – In this hands-on experience led by musician and educator Antonio Davidson-Gómez, participants will play instruments from U.S. Latino and Latin American traditions and literally “connect the dots” on a map to see how Latinos have contributed to popular music in the United States.

June 19
ONE TRAIL, MANY VOICES: SONGS OF THE OREGON TRAIL
PASCO – The version of the Oregon Trail journey that most of us learned as children presents hardy, American-born pioneers heading west for adventure. The truth is far different. Folksinger and storyteller Hank Cramer will share the traditional folk songs of the diverse groups of emigrants on the Oregon Trail and explore how migration via the trail affected the travelers, their songs and the culture of the Pacific Northwest.

Photo by John Marshall

More information about these events, along with a complete calendar of Humanities Washington activities (sortable by region): humanities.org/calendar
NEWS & NOTES

Compiled by Humanities Washington staff

Bedtime Stories Seattle and Spokane

Dates have been set for our Bedtime Stories fundraisers, two nights of food, wine and words featuring local authors unveiling original works written specifically for the events. Bedtime Stories Seattle will be at The Fairmont Olympic Hotel Oct. 3; Bedtime Stories Spokane will be at the Spokane Club Oct. 17.

MORE ONLINE
Check our website (humanities.org) and blog (SparkMag.org) this summer for more information and tickets.

Welcome New Staff

Humanities Washington welcomes three new staffers to our team! We are thrilled to have George Abeyta, our new development coordinator; Courtney Czarnecki, our program coordinator; and Paige Spicer, our database administrator, in our offices. Former Development Coordinator Chase Clancy and Communications Director Andrew Wahl have moved on to new ventures, and we wish them all the best.

MORE ONLINE
Visit humanities.org/about/staff for more information.

Seeking Speakers Bureau Applicants

Humanities Washington is seeking applicants for our Speakers Bureau program. Speakers Bureau is a roster of cultural experts and scholars that provides low-cost, high-quality public presentations across the state, encouraging audiences to think, learn and engage in conversation.

Applications for the 2015-16 roster of speakers are due April 25.

MORE ONLINE
For more information on our Speakers Bureau program, including how to apply to be a 2015-16 speaker, visit humanities.org/speakers

Humanities Washington Launches the Washington Stories Fund

In 2014, Humanities Washington will introduce a new grant opportunity, the Washington Stories Fund. The fund aims to broadly share the little-known stories of people and communities that enhance the cultural richness and health of our state. Humanities Washington will work with existing cultural groups and organizations to source and share these stories by providing matching grant funds to qualified projects.

Thank you to the Lenore and Charles Hale Family Fund for their leadership gift and to the 50 donors who have contributed to make this initiative a reality.

MORE ONLINE:
To learn more about the Washington Stories Fund, visit humanities.org/WashingtonStoriesFund

40 Opportunity Grants

In honor of our 40th anniversary, Humanities Washington will distribute 40 Opportunity Grants in 2014 to projects all around the state that spark conversation and critical thinking. Opportunity grants are available year-round and do not require a funding match; organizations may request up to $1,000.

MORE ONLINE
For more on Humanities Washington’s grants program, visit humanities.org/grants.
Last year was one of growth and achievement for Humanities Washington. Following a rigorous strategic planning process, in which we redeveloped our mission statement and put story and conversation at the core of our work, we continued to evolve our programs to reflect that mission.

In this annual report, we are excited to share our 2013 program accomplishments with you:

- The new Prime Time Family Reading program was expanded to several parts of the state to bring families together and use reading and storytelling to explore ethical and cultural questions.

- Grants created opportunities for people throughout the state to come together and use the humanities to promote critical thinking around important community issues. Examples of these programs include discussions of tribal recognition in Vancouver and community engagement in Spokane.

- The Speakers Bureau brought more than 200 conversations to museums, libraries and community centers around the state on topics like human trafficking and historical fiction.

- Our Traveling Exhibit, Hope in Hard Times, visited several museums and libraries throughout the state. It encouraged each community to compare the struggles of the 1930s to those faced today.

- Think & Drink brought programming to unexpected venues and new audiences in Seattle, Spokane, Yakima and Tacoma. Topical issues such as healthcare, urban planning and the Latino experience sparked lively discussions.

- The 2012-14 Washington State Poet Laureate, Kathleen Flenniken, inspired awareness and appreciation of poetry with public readings and workshops throughout the state.

We are honored to have your steadfast support. We could not have accomplished these programs without you, and for that we are very thankful.

Please follow us at humanities.org and SparkMag.org for upcoming events and information about the work of Humanities Washington.
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Our friends and supporters help Humanities Washington nurture thoughtful and engaged communities by ensuring we can continue to provide free or very low-cost programming in all corners of the state.

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† Denotes donors to the Washington Stories Fund.
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When asked if a Humanities Washington program sparked meaningful discussion, the average participant responded STRONGLY AGREE, rating the event a 5.4 out of 6.
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As the state’s flagship nonprofit for the humanities, our work brings people together to learn about their unique pasts and shared present, promotes respect for other perspectives, encourages community dialogue and nurtures relationships that enable us to move toward a more prosperous future.

By acting as a catalyst and facilitator, we support and partner with a wide network of communities, organizations and individuals across the state. Together, we provide low- or no-cost, high-quality cultural and educational programs that engage audiences in conversation, civil discourse and critical thinking.

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Humanities Washington
1015 8th Ave. N., Suite B
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Humanities Washington is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in Washington state.
OUR MISSION

*Humanities Washington sparks conversation and critical thinking using story as a catalyst, nurturing thoughtful and engaged communities across our state.*

OUR PROGRAMS

**BEDTIME STORIES** is an annual literary celebration featuring critically acclaimed Northwest writers unveiling new short stories created specifically for dinner galas in Seattle and Spokane.

**FAMILY READING** uses storytelling and discussion to explore cultural and ethical themes in children’s literature and emphasizes the importance of families reading together.

**GRANTS** assist local organizations in creating opportunities for their community to come together to discuss important issues using the humanities.

**SPEAKERS BUREAU** draws from a pool of leading cultural experts and scholars to provide free conversational lecture events for community partners to offer local audiences throughout the state.

**THINK & DRINK** brings hosted conversations on provocative topics and new ideas to pubs and tasting rooms around the state.

**TRAVELING EXHIBITS** brings museum-quality exhibits and dynamic programming to underserved areas and surprising venues around the state.

**WASHINGTON STATE POET LAUREATE** builds awareness and appreciation of poetry — including the state’s legacy of poetry — through public readings, workshops, lectures and presentations throughout the state. (In partnership with ArtsWA.)

MORE ONLINE

Additional information about any of our programs: humanities.org/programs
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