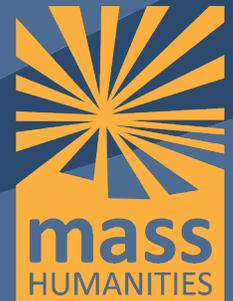


THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS SUMMER 2021



By Brian Boyles

On a recent Saturday, after a fruitless search for old growth forest, my family ended up in Shelburne Falls, the picturesque village ten miles west of Greenfield, just off Route 2. We ate pizza outside, and then walked across the Bridge of Flowers. The bridge, which spans the Deerfield River between the towns of Shelburne and Buckland, is one of our favorite places in western Mass. The last time we visited, in August 2020, an abrupt mesh fence greeted us at the entrance to the bridge, closed due to the pandemic. Now, following the lifting of restrictions on May 29, the fence was gone. We made our way past the dazzling variety of flora, pausing every few feet to let the kids pull down their masks and smell the flowers as dusk fell in the valley.

Standing on that bridge, after 15 months of isolation, I felt a pang of gratitude. We would not be standing here, I thought, without the decisions of so many individuals to do the right thing. First responders, and scientists, food bank workers and teachers, local officials and each of us who kept our masks on and socially distanced—every sacrifice and every sensible choice that led to that fence coming down. As we begin to put the depths of the pandemic into perspective, we will need that decency and persistence for the fight that awaits us. The disasters continue. Misinformation sparks violence, inequality deepens the suffering, and sweet moments on well-tended bridges are fleeting. For the first time in what seemed like forever, though, I glimpsed a change I could embrace. I felt grateful for the countless humans who gave a damn about their fellow humans.

Mass Humanities, too, is crossing a bridge. We emerge from this pandemic with new assets and challenges, but most importantly, a sense of direction. At our June meeting, I will provide an overview of the work already underway to implement our new strategic plan. As we begin to talk about the plan publicly, I want to be sure we convey the recent accomplishments of our staff in the face of unprecedented changes:

- We doubled the support we provide to Massachusetts communities. Total grant-making since June 2020: 288 grants, \$1,112,199. In our last non-pandemic fiscal year, Mass Humanities awarded 78 grants totaling \$522,000. We responded to this crisis with sustained opportunities that met the needs of our field. From operational support to technology needs to streamlined processes, we proved our commitment to reaching every corner of the commonwealth;
- We grew the Clemente Course, which serves adults from communities hardest hit by the pandemic. Since June 2020, we completed 7 new educational offerings for past Clemente students through the short courses funded by the Mellon Foundation. Our last significant change to Clemente came 7 years ago, when we brought on the Springfield site. This summer, we will launch another 4 courses focused on Massachusetts stories. We are publishing writers whose voices are too often neglected, and in a time when they are more necessary than ever;
- We expanded the Reading Frederick Douglass Together program. From

11 online events in 2020 to at least 21, the majority of them in-person, scheduled for this July, we met the moment for communities seeking to address the legacy of slavery, providing funding on a rolling basis in a simplified process.

- We set new highs in fundraising. Our 2020 Governor's Awards raised our second highest net revenue in the history of the event. We launched the Bridge Street Friends and a planned giving initiative, surpassed our previous mark for the end-of-the-year appeal, and received our largest individual donation for our annual fund.
- We rebuilt our financial systems and processes. Since November, we moved our fiscal operations to fully remote, instituted new internal controls, and brought our reporting to current standards. We handled a PPP, an influx of federal grant funds, and a successful audit. We are much stronger in both our resources and our architecture.

This is the work of Deepika Fernandes, John Sieracki, Katherine Stevens, and Michelle Railsback Wilson, as well as several previous staff members whose positions we will fill this month. They deserve not only your applause, not only for these highlights, but for their daily commitment to this work. As we regain a sense of normalcy after working remotely, not fully staffed, and through the difficulties of the pandemic, I am grateful to the board for supporting all of us. I hope you will share these successes as we begin the relaunch of Mass Humanities. Good change is here.

GRANTS

Overview: Mass Humanities awards grants to non-profit organizations through several grants deadlines as well as “rolling” opportunities. In FY2020, MH distributed grants to 207 organizations.

Expand Massachusetts Stories Grants

Deadline: LOIs due 6/22, grants reviewed by GRC in August 2021, approved at the Sept. 2021 board meeting.

Expected total grants: \$325,000+/-, our largest grant round ever.

This round begins the implementation of the Strategic Plan’s key initiative 2, “Create learning networks of grantees to share wisdom, identify needs, and shape new grant opportunities that elevate the stories of Massachusetts residents.” Once grants are awarded, we will select a group for the first learning network and begin partnering with grantees to develop future grant opportunities. The Expand MA Stories opportunity also marks the resumption of the Grants Review Committee’s traditional role in reviewing and recommending our largest grants.

Bridge Street Fund

Deadline: Monthly beginning in March 2021, reviewed by staff, approved by Executive Director.

Expected total grants: 50, \$56,000.

The Bridge Street Fund, a grant opportunity made possible by MCC funds and private donations, was established to support historical institutions with online event expenses. To date, the fund supported 109 online events hosted by a wide range of institutions, from the Lawrence History Center to Ventfort Hall in Lenox. The fund is nearly expended, so we will pause to assess the demand for these programs with reopening and good weather finally here. A full list of grantees is attached to this report.

Sustaining Humanities through the

American Rescue Plan (SHARP) Grants Program

Report: Katherine Stevens

As part of the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) received \$135 million in funding to assist humanities organizations and programs affected by the coronavirus pandemic. The NEH will distribute these funds through its “Sustaining the Humanities through the American Rescue Plan” (SHARP) grants programs to humanities organizations, humanities granting organizations, and state humanities councils. Mass Humanities will receive \$1.03M to sustain the humanities locally. Councils may use up to 10% of their allocated funds to administer the program. Mass Humanities has begun the process of designing and promoting a grants program in response to this request from the NEH.

Our progress to date:

- Preparation: On April 26 and May 20, Mass Humanities staff received and reviewed “Frequently Asked Questions” guidance from the NEH. Brian Boyles and Katherine Stevens also attended informational webinars on the program.
- Administration: On May 17, Mass Humanities hired Meri Jenkins for a three-month appointment, under the direction of Katherine Stevens, to administer Mass Humanities’ SHARP Grants Program. Meri worked for over two decades at the Mass Cultural Council, designing and managing grants programs. In particular, she focused on economic development grants to the cultural sector. Recently, she worked with the Fall River Arts Council on its relief grants program.
- Promotion: On June 1, Mass Humanities released its first newsletter announcement about the upcoming opportunity.
- Research: Mass Humanities surveyed CARES Act grant recipients to assess their current revenue

and staffing position, as well as their needs in the coming year.

- Program Design: On June 18, Mass Humanities’ Executive Committee will review the program process and design.

We anticipate the following program schedule:

- Tuesday, July 6, 2021 - Online grant application available
- Wednesday, July 14, 2021 - Online webinar about the grant application
- Wednesday, August 4, 2021 - Online application deadline
- Mid- September, 2021 - Notification to applicants

Mass Humanities’ SHARP grant applications will be reviewed by panelists assembled for this program. Panelists will include past and present Mass Humanities board members and humanists in our state. Mass Humanities will assemble the panel with attention to diverse perspectives. Mass Humanities’ Executive Committee will review and approve final recommendations.

PROGRAMS

Reading Frederick Douglass Together

Report: Katherine Stevens

Overview: Mass Humanities provides funds up to \$2,000 to organizations to host readings of Douglass’s speech, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” We also partner for readings on Boston Common and in Northampton.

Mass Humanities has received a record number of grant applications for RFDT. As of 6/7/2021, we have approved 16 applications or sponsorships and anticipate approving 3-4 more ahead of the July 4th holiday. Mass Humanities will keep the grant opportunity open through the summer. Where two organizations from the same city have applied, we have been able to put the organizers in touch to collaborate, instead of

compete, on messaging and access to the event. We are also supporting Historic Northampton and State Rep. Lindsay Sabadosa's office on an event in Northampton. We anticipate directly supporting 20-25 events this year, and having a number of additional events use our materials and list their events on our calendar.

Total Awarded as of 6/7/2021: \$25,290. A list of organizations and events is attached to this report.

Clemente Course in the Humanities

Overview: Mass Humanities supports the course in Brockton, Dorchester, New Bedford, Springfield, and Worcester. Participants come from households at or below 150% of the federal poverty rate. The students participate in 110 hours of scholar-led instruction in Art History, US History, Literature, Philosophy and Creative Writing. Graduates receive 6 free credits from Bard College.

Update: Final reports from all 5 traditional Clemente sites are due June 15. We will provide an update at the September meeting on those courses, and the plans for full courses in the fall. A new Program Officer will lead the program starting in July.

For this year's summer courses, we offered all sites the opportunity to engage students in considering events, ideas, or challenges related to Massachusetts. This may include explorations of a movement or event in Massachusetts history; writers, artists or other thinkers based in Massachusetts; experiences of Massachusetts residents in navigating the present and imagining the future; and intersections with Mass-Moments.org. Faculty responded with four courses:

- Brockton – Led by Aminah Pilgrim and Willie Wilson, the class will explore Brockton's dynamic past, beginning with its indigenous origins, and humble beginnings as "North Bridgewater" and continuing to the present moment where it has become the state's only majority

Black or majority Afro-descendant city

- Worcester – Led by Lucia Knoles and Iris Adler, in partnership with the American Antiquarian Society, the class will examine the ways in which Black contributions to the Civil War were represented in the nineteenth century, remembered, and memorialized in the years after. Students will also explore questions about commemorations of Civil War Black soldiers in the 21st century.
- New Bedford – Led by Susan Hagan and Memory Holloway, students will explore the history of the southeast MA region, specifically Frederick Douglass, the Wampanoag, and industrialization after the peak of whaling and the rise and fall of the textile industries with MassMoments incorporated into the readings.
- Springfield – Led by Gina Ocasion, students will read and respond to activists such as W.E.B. Du Bois, David Ruggles, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglas, and the Combahee River Collective in order to understand the legacy of social justice informing contemporary activists and movements. Each week our aim will be to read carefully, think critically, and write ethically about these diverse figures in the history of our Commonwealth.

Budget for summer courses: \$33,700

Virtual Events

Overview: Since March 2020, virtual programming opened up new opportunities for Mass Humanities to reach our audiences around the state, reconnect with current and past grantees, and produce our own events without the expenses and logistical challenges of physical locations.

Update: We wrap up this phase of our MS+MA partnership with the Mississippi Humanities Council on Thursday, June 17, with a Grammy nominated musician, two music fes-

tivals and two musicologists, plus a new generation of the Neville family of musicians. We will meet with the MHC team after this to assess the strengths and consider another series in the future.

3/18 Verses and Voices	61
4/21 School Integration	96
6/17 Blues Routes	60 RSVPs
Total for 3 Q2 events	217

Smithsonian Institution Museum on Main Street

Overview: This year begins the first partnership between the Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street (MoMs) initiative and Mass Humanities. The Crossroads: "Change in Rural America" traveling exhibition will come to Massachusetts Sept 2022-July 2023.

Update: The RFP for sites will go out in July 2021, with media outreach coordinated through HEARD and the legislative offices. We confirmed Dr. Leo Hwang of UMass-Amherst as project scholar. Hwang, Katherine Stevens, board member Larry Hott, and I attended May workshops with the Smithsonian to get acquainted with the tour content and logistics. I met recently with the Rural Policy Advisory Commission at the suggestion of our state senator. A new program officer will take on the role of leading the MoMs initiative.

Budget: We will commit \$60,000 of our NEH funds in 6 grants of \$10K each to the 6 host sites.

RESOURCES



National Endowment for the Humanities

Overview: As one of 55 state humanities councils, Mass Humanities receives an annual base grant from NEH to support operations, grant making and programs. The total NEH budget includes a line item for the Federal-State Partnership, traditionally 30% of the total budget, distributed to the councils based largely on population. NEH receives its funding

through the Dept. of the Interior. We lobby for NEH in general and in particular for the Partnership, under the guidance of the Federation of State Humanities Councils.

Update: NEH advised last week that the American Rescue Plan funds will be disbursed to the councils on June 15. We plan to distribute at least 90% of the \$1.03 million we will receive to Massachusetts non-profits. The Executive Committee will review the process and timeline for the Sustaining the Humanities through the American Rescue Plan grants (aka SHARP, per NEH instructions). Katherine Stevens deserves credit for leading the preparations. See the Grants section of this report for more details.

For FY2022, the Biden Administration requested \$177.5 million, including \$54.3 million for the Federal/State Partnership, which funds the state humanities councils. This compares with \$167.5 million and \$51.5 million in the current budget. The Federation of State Humanities Councils and the National Humanities Alliance had established a request of \$225 million. We will continue to advocate for a higher number for NEH with our congressional delegation.

NEH has set Oct. 12-14, 2021, for its 5-year visit. I began drafting the self-assessment, which will be due in August. We will continue to plan meetings with the site visit team and stakeholders. I also consulted with my predecessor, David Tebaldi, who is a veteran of the process and a past member of site visit teams to other councils. I am optimistic about the learning opportunity of this process.



Overview: Mass Cultural Council issues funding to Mass Humanities each year under an arrangement updated in 2020. Mass Humanities lobbies on behalf of MCC throughout the budget season, participates

in advocacy efforts under the direction of MCC and MASSCreative, and regularly connects legislators with grantees in their district through direct communications, social media, and reporting. Mass Humanities receives the equivalent of 3.77% of MCC's total annual budget, making us the agency's largest grantee.

Update: The House and Senate budgets increased MCC funding to \$20 million for FY22, which would result in an increase of \$68,000 in our annual allocation. During the budget process, we

- Asked our supporters to advocate for increased funding
- Testified to the Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development along with MCC's Michael Bobbit.
- Sent updates to legislators about recently awarded grants, orientation materials to new legislators, and tagged reps on social media.

We will send individual emails to each legislator to alert them of the SHARP funds. Michael Bobbit and I now have monthly meetings scheduled. Thanks goes to Michelle Railsback Wilson for assisting with our legislative outreach this season, as well as all board members who sent notes to their state senators.

MCC's David Slatery joins us at the June 18 board meeting for an update.

Private Fundraising

Report: John Sieracki
As you can see on the table below, we have raised \$270,777 in charitable contributions received so far this fiscal year, Nov 1 – May 31. This is just a hair over where we were at the same time last year. Our goal is \$500,000; last year we raised close to \$515,000. That was an unusual year in many aspects, including an unexpectedly high revenue for the Governor's Awards, so we used some caution in setting this year's goal.

Mass Humanities Charitable Contributions			
Fiscal Year Comparison			
Unrestricted and Temporarily Restricted			
YEAR-TO-DATE AS OF MAY 31			
	2020	2021	Goal
SOURCES			
Corporations	5,970	12,500	40,000
Foundations	20,750	15,000	80,000
Individuals	194,103	193,227	320,000
Other Orgs	47,100	50,050	60,000
TOTAL	267,923	270,777	500,000
APPEALS			
Annual	140,437	166,352	160,000
Benefit Dinner	40,975	44,425	240,000
Proposals	49,350	50,000	70,000
Other	37,161	10,000	30,000
TOTAL	267,923	270,777	500,000
PROGRAMS			
Unrestricted	110,820	131,640	350,000
Clemente	107,543	129,117	100,000
Other	49,560	10,020	50,000
TOTAL	267,923	270,777	500,000
At 58% of the FY:	52%	54%	
	of Actual	of Goal	

Governor's Awards

Save the date: Sunday, October 24, 5pm at the Kennedy Library.

With capacity limited to 200, we will be reserving seats for our award recipients' friends and family, sponsors, board members, and other VIPs who are comfortable with attending. The event will be livestreamed for others.

We have confirmed our four recipients:

- John Burgess. Retired corporate lawyer, now a professor of maritime law at Tufts; longtime MH supporter, former board member and chair.
- Annette Gordon-Reed. Pulitzer Prize- and National Book Award-winning professor and scholar at Harvard University.
- Sonia Nieto. Internationally regarded scholar and champion of multicultural education, and former member of the MH board.
- Heather Cox Richardson. Political historian at Boston College whose Letters from an American daily blog essays have helped Americans make sense of 2020 and beyond.

Our goal this year is \$240,000, and the critical piece – gathering sponsorships – is getting underway. The sponsorship tiers will be the same as last year, and the web page and PDF description will be available soon, before the 6/18 board meeting.

Campaign Preparation

At the end of May, we completed the search for fundraising consultants to help us with an internal audit of fundraising capability, a campaign plan, and translating our strategic plan into a case for funding. We signed a contract with Copley Raff, and Larry Raff and Diane Blumenson have been busy collecting information and interviewing key members of the fundraising team. Larry will check in with the development committee this month so we can provide a full update at the 6/18 meeting. Many thanks to Bill Fowler and Steve Immerman for participating in the search interviews.

In the meantime, we have been interviewing major donors who are closest to MH to get their feedback on the plan as we turn it into documents for public consumption. It's clear that there are areas that need clarification, rewording of jargon terms, and a reordering of the elements of the plan. This is in addition to images and stories that will make obvious the relevance of the plan to today's issues and people's lives.

Spring Appeal

As of June 4, we have raised \$3,777 in the form of 33 gifts toward the

spring appeal. This is on par with years before 2020. The appeal focused on the Clemente Summer Writing Course and the image of a quilt made by one of the participants last summer that told the story of her heritage. The letter and colorful insert featuring the quilt are included in your materials. The appeal included customized snail-mail letters with the insert to 650+ past donors, a series of emails to 8,400+ people, and posts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The letters went out in the last week of May, so we expect more to come later this month.

This result is sharply lower than last year, when we raised close to \$20,000 through an entirely online appeal. The urgency was much more acute last year – we needed to buy equipment for Clemente scholars to keep the program going online, and people felt a strong urge to help with donations at that time just after the pandemic hit.

Bridge Street Friends

The committee overseeing the formation of the Bridge Street Friends has grown to ten with the addition of former advisory board members Jim Burke, Susan Leff, Martin Newhouse, Jack Regan, and Perry Wu joining Ben Birnbaum, Al Griggs, Nancy Netzer, and Laura Roberts. Also, many thanks to Lennie Alickman for graciously agreeing to serve as the board liaison to the group. This month we got the group's feedback on the strategic plan, and how to present it to a wider audience. They

are also getting ready to help raise funds for the Governor's Awards, especially given that John Burgess and Sonia Nieto are members of the Bridge Street Friends.

COMMUNICATIONS

Overview: Mass Humanities contracts with HEARD Strategy to 1) direct our social media platforms, 2) conduct targeted outreach to traditional media, and 3) assist with branding and design. Mass Humanities staff works directly with a three-person team, filling monthly calendars established for social media and newsletters.

Update: We contracted with HEARD a year ago at the outset of the CARES Act funding. As we plan media outreach for the SHARP grants, which will require another round of traditional media outreach, we are also examining the relationship to understand

- Future staffing of our communications efforts.
- Focusing in on specific audiences and goals for social media
- Role of communications in announcing the strategic plan.
- Possibilities of new original digital media.

At our request, HEARD recently prepared an audit of our social media, which the Communications Committee has reviewed and noted follow up questions. In Q3, we should settle on a strategy for the next year for this relationship, and identify where we can improve our daily direction of communications.

- MH Facebook followers: 2,972 June 2021 vs. 2,538 Nov. 2020 (15% increase)
- MassMoments Facebook followers: 5,466 June. 2021 vs. 4,228 Nov. 2020 (23% increase)
- Twitter followers: 3,377 vs. 3,240 Nov. 2020 (5% increase)
- Instagram followers: 987 March 21 vs. 736 Nov. 2020 (17% increase)

Top 10 Donors so far in FY2021	
Anonymous	\$75,000
Federation of State Humanities Councils	\$50,000
Lia and William Poorvu	\$25,000
The George I. Alden Trust	\$15,000
Marcia Butzel	\$10,000
Alfred and Sally Griggs	\$10,000
John A. Burgess	\$7,500
Margot G. Botsford and Stephen Rosenfeld	\$5,000
Katherine and Phillippe Villers	\$4,000
Falik Philanthropic Fund	\$2,000
	\$203,500