



FLORIDA HUMANITIES: SUPPORTING LITERACY, LIBRARIES & LEARNING

BY PATRICIA PUTMAN

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

This year, Florida Humanities celebrates its 50th anniversary as the nonprofit affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Working with library systems, public libraries and academic libraries has been a valued partnership for us in helping to fulfill our mission “to preserve, promote and share the history, literature, cultures and personal stories that offer Floridians a better understanding of themselves, their communities and their state. “As a grantmaker, Florida Humanities provides funding opportunities to support programs in communities across the state hosted by libraries, museums, historical societies, and other cultural organizations. Since 1973, Florida Humanities has awarded over \$20 million toward grants and public projects. From literature to language and history to heritage, these diverse programs explore what makes us human. Through the humanities, we learn how to think creatively and critically, to reason, and to ask questions, coming to a broader understanding of our shared human experience.

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OUR HISTORY

Every state, plus six U.S. territories, has a humanities council thanks to the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act signed by President Lyndon Johnson in 1965. That law created the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), with NEH being charged to advance the humanities and its respective disciplines into the public square. Florida’s council was established in 1973 as the Florida Endowment for the Humanities and then changed to the Florida Humanities Council. After rebranding a few years ago, we are now simply Florida Humanities.



FLORIDA HUMANITIES IN LIBRARIES

Florida Humanities has a longtime commitment to literacy and learning, and libraries are eligible for a number of our funding opportunities.. The most popular one is **Florida Talks**, a wonderful opportunity for libraries to host scholars, authors, humanities experts and more from our prestigious speaker's bureau. Organizations can select from nearly 60 presentations from our engaging speakers who deliver Florida's history, heritage, and culture through historical and contemporary lenses.

In 2022, we launched our **Book Festival Grants**, which support events celebrating the joy of reading, encourage thoughtful interactions between authors and their readers, and reflect on how literature conveys human experience. Our libraries are taking this opportunity to bring nationally known authors to their communities (author and award-winning chef Edward Lee participated in St. Johns County Public Library System's St. Johns Reads 2023) as well as create dynamic programming to engage with their patrons and the community at large.

Libraries can also receive support to host a templated program called **English for Families**, a multi-week series of interactive classes for families that focus on developing English vocabulary and literacy skills for English as a second language (ESOL) speaker. Developed with Orange County Library System, the program has been implemented in locations like the New Port Richey Public Library, Sarasota County Libraries and Palm Springs Public Library.

LOOKING AHEAD

We will use this space in upcoming issues to highlight Florida Humanities funded library partners and their programs' impact. We will also discuss our other funding opportunities such as: **Greater Good: Humanities in Academia**, a good fit for academic libraries; **Broadcasting Hope Media Grants**, which supports public media, film, or digital projects and **Museum on Main Street**, which provides funding to bring traveling exhibitions from the Smithsonian Institution to your community! And we will have exciting details to share about our new designation as Florida's **Center for the Book**, a Library of Congress affiliate program that promotes literature and literacy in all 50 states and six territories through public programming.

As we celebrate our milestone anniversary in 2023, we will continue strengthening our partnerships with libraries and show our love and appreciation of literature, literacy, and learning.

