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4-10-1989

## Reauthorization: Hearing and Reports (1990): Correspondence 05

John H. Hammer

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10 April 1989

Mr. Alexander Crary  
Professional Staff Member  
Education, Arts and Humanities Subcommittee  
648 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Sandy:

It was good to see you last week at the ACLS bash. I was also reminded that I have been somewhat remiss in sending you copies of NHA materials of interest. Therefore, I enclose:

1) Rod French's 3/22/89 testimony on the NEH appropriation for FY-90 presented to Mr. Yates' Subcommittee. The statement includes material on the affect of the underfunding of NEH's Division of Research Programs and, by implication, the shortage of funds in other programs at NEH. Whether or not one speaks of "all the proposals with an 'excellent' ranking" (Bennett/Agresto) or the "continuum of excellence" (Cheney), the fact is that many of the most highly rated projects are left seriously underfunded.

2) A copy of a letter the Alliance sent to Rex Arney at NEH in January offering suggestions for the Endowment's reauthorization proposal. With some refinements (and of course an interest in the revised authorized funding levels) these continue to encompass the central concerns of the Alliance in the reauthorization as we discussed in January.

3. Sidney Verba's testimony on preservation also presented at the 3/22/89 hearing of outside witnesses.

I trust that you found the ACLS luncheon and subsequent lecture as uplifting as I did.

Cheers,



John H. Hammer  
Director

Enclosures (3)

Statement of Roderick S. French  
Vice President for Academic Affairs, George Washington University  
speaking as President of the National Humanities Alliance

On the Fiscal Year 1990 Appropriation for the  
National Endowment for the Humanities

Before the Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives

22 March 1989

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am Roderick S. French, Professor of Philosophy and Vice President for Academic Affairs at the George Washington University. At present, I am also serving as President of the National Humanities Alliance. It is a pleasure to testify before you today and to represent the National Humanities Alliance and its more than fifty members, including learned and professional societies as well as organizations representing museums, libraries, historical societies, state humanities councils, and other non-profit institutions committed to enhancing the place of humanistic inquiry in American life and to assisting in the development of federal policies for the support of research, teaching, and other humanities activities. A list of NHA's members is attached.

As a practitioner in the academic humanities as well as an administrator, I have a long-term concern for and interest in the NEH and federal policies affecting the humanities. I was a charter member and first chairman of the D.C. Community Humanities Council and later served on the Board of the Federation of State Humanities Councils. My work at my own institution has been generously supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities, including a challenge grant of \$800,000 for which I was the principal investigator. Other divisions of the Endowment have supported a variety of curricular initiatives on my campus. The fact of the matter is that the vitality and influence of the humanities in the George Washington University are incalculably

greater as a result of the Endowment's assistance over the last twenty years. Beyond the seemliness of acknowledging this debt in this setting, I do so in confidence that the same testimony would be gladly given by my counterparts in countless colleges and universities across the country.

Indeed, we all now recognize that the National Endowment for the Humanities has become our society's largest and most important funder of research, teaching, and public programs in the humanities. Last year in testimony before this Subcommittee, William G. Bowen, an economist serving as President of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation reported on his study of the support for humanities provided by NEH contrasted with support by the largest philanthropic foundations. He concluded that NEH is by far the most important single source of funding for the humanities in the U.S. today. "It is no exaggeration to say that the decisions made concerning the budget for NEH (overall size and composition), and the subsequent administration of the funds, have an absolutely decisive impact on the health and character of the humanities in America." Bowen's analysis showed that the 30 largest private foundations in the United States, taken together, make grants to the humanities in a given year that are less than half the grants made by the Endowment.

It is not surprising then that there is widespread interest in NEH's appropriations. Given its impact on so many fields of study and, in many ways, on the quality of public life in this country, the question -- how adequate are NEH resources? -- becomes more than the rhetorical query of a special interest

group. It is now a matter of concern to a broad sector of society, in and out of the academy.

Against that backdrop, we are pleased to note that the budget proposal for the National Endowment for the Humanities for the next fiscal year calls for an increase over the current year's appropriation. While the increase is slight, it is nevertheless a continuation of a welcome trend begun last year that broke the recent pattern of consistently proposing reductions. Thanks to you, Mr. Chairman, the members of this Subcommittee and, of course, your colleagues in the Senate, it has been possible to maintain the dollar level of appropriations within the range of the budgets of a decade ago. (In fact, the budget for the current year for the first time exceeds the high water mark of \$151.3 million reached in 1981.) However, we must recognize also the reality of a significant decline in the real value of the appropriations in recent years. Based upon figures made available by the Senate Budget Committee, the Association of American Museums has calculated that the FY-90 funding request for the NEH would have had to have been \$213,330,000 or \$60 million higher than the actual request if the level of funding in 1981 were maintained in constant dollars.

Robert Hollander, Professor of Romance Languages and Literature at Princeton and a member of the National Council on the Humanities recently added an interesting perspective to Mr. Bowen's comparative figures on NEH and foundation support for the humanities. Starting with an estimate that total federal expenditures for research in science and engineering in FY-1988

were \$9 billion, contrasted with an estimate that NEH support for research during the same period was approximately \$30 million, Professor Hollander calculated that the federal government supports research in the humanities at roughly one-third of one percent of the amount provided for science and technology.

To come to specifics, the National Humanities Alliance is especially grateful to the Chairman and members of this Subcommittee for leadership in fully funding the NEH initiative for the preservation of brittle books. Please be assured that the investment at this time is not only of inestimable value to scholars, but also contributes effectively to the expansion of access to our cultural resources for the entire interested public. We urge the Subcommittee to recommend the full increase proposed for the second year of the initiative.

I am obliged to voice as well our concern that the budgets of the other regular programs of the Endowment are in need of additional resources. Their ability to respond to the most urgent needs from the field has become increasingly strained as the real dollar value of their appropriations has declined on average by more than one third over this decade. We urge the Subcommittee to increase funding for these programs minimally to the levels of the current year's budget adjusted for inflation.

Last year, Ms. Cheney, the Chairman of the Endowment, testified that within the general context of the adequacy of NEH appropriations to meet the needs of the highest quality work proposed to the agency, programs in the Division of Research

Programs and the Office of Challenge Grants were under the heaviest budgetary stress. Anecdotal evidence gathered by the Alliance and others confirms that this continues to be the case, especially in the Research programs and that, to varying degrees, the problem pervades most of the programs at NEH.

Division of Research Program grant figures show that there is a significant shortfall in funds to support the most highly ranked work. For example, Access program records for FY-1987 indicated that of 168 proposals, 39 were funded: 34 proposals were ranked Excellent but only 26 of these were funded; of 14 ranked Very Good, 4 were funded. (The Access program supports a variety of activities aimed at increasing the availability of research collections such as cataloguing projects, records surveys and the like. Often these projects are important to preservation because the program supports assessments of materials thereby identifying deteriorating materials in need of preservation or conservation.)

Another result of the long-term squeeze on funds at NEH is that many projects are funded but with considerably reduced budgets. Marcus McCorison, the Director and Librarian of the American Antiquarian Society (AAS), the first national historic society in America and a participant in the Alliance through the Independent Research Libraries Association, wrote to Mr. Yates on this problem. With Dr. McCorison's permission we quote from that letter because we believe it most usefully illustrates the nature and impact of the problem. "In recent years the Research Division on NEH has not received funding commensurate with the demonstrated

need for support in that area. The Research Division administers grants that fund work that is basic to the humanities -- support of library collections and access to them, the publication of reference tools and scholarly editions upon which subsequent scholarship and teaching depends, and the like...

In 1985 AAS obtained a grant to fund the cataloguing into a national computerized bibliographical data base of 12,500 books published for American children from 1821 to 1876 (the best collection in existence). As that grant period wound down and having completed the portion of the project in accord with our original plan of work approved by NEH, we applied in 1988 for a three year (1989-91) continuation that would carry the project to completion. Our renewal application was rated in the top half dozen in its review cycle. But, because of the extreme shortage of funds in the Access Category of the Research Division, we were awarded just about half of the submitted budget -- a budget that NEH staff will testify as being honest. This award, as it stands, leaves the project in limbo. When the money runs out we will have reached no rational concluding place within the collection -- either chronological, alphabetical, or what have you.

As it turns out, we believe that NEH staff can make additional Treasury Matching Funds available to us so that we can at least get the project funded to a point where, if we must close it down still incomplete, it can be left where it can be picked up again at a logical place. However, AAS will have to raise \$35,000 from non-federal sources to bring it to that point. If you have ever attempted to raise private moneys for cataloguing books, while conducting the usual drive for the Annual Operating Fund, you know how frustrating such a task can be."

In summary, the NEH is the most important institution in the U. S. concerned with the health and vigor of the humanities. I have stressed today the categories of research and the preservation of the artifacts of creativity in the humanities. I might have spoken quite as forcefully as an advocate for education programs in need of support by the Endowment. Few things are

agitating the American people more than their concerns regarding the education of our children and youth in the subject matter of the humanities. The Endowment's rhetorical emphasis on the value of the humanities in the formation of the character of new generations must be matched by resources that encourage excellence in humanities teaching as well as in research and public programs.

We in the Alliance very much appreciate the role that the Subcommittee has played in protecting the viability of the Endowment but we also worry that the steady decline in the real dollar value of NEH's grants is weakening both institutions and individual scholars working in the field.

The preservation initiative begun last year is meeting a critical need and meeting it very well. We encourage full funding of the increase requested for 1990. But we also ask that all of the programs of the Endowment be sustained at least at the current levels with adjustments for inflation. For the humanities constitute a system in the United States -- every part having an impact on the other. That is why the Alliance supports the entire range of activities comprised in the National Endowment for the Humanities -- from fellowships and research through education and public programs.

# The **NHA** National Humanities Alliance

## Members of the National Humanities Alliance

American Academy of Religion  
American Anthropological Association  
American Association of Museums  
American Association for State and Local History  
American Conference of Academic Deans  
American Council of Learned Societies  
American Dialect Society  
American Folklore Society  
American Historical Association  
American Library Association  
American Musicological Society  
American Numismatic Society  
American Philological Association  
American Philosophical Association  
American Political Science Association  
American Society for Aesthetics  
American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies  
American Society for Legal History  
American Society for Theatre Research  
American Sociological Association  
American Studies Association  
Association for Asian Studies  
Association for Jewish Studies  
Association of American Colleges  
Association of American Geographers  
Association of American Law Schools  
Association of American University Presses  
Association of Research Libraries  
College Art Association of America  
College English Association  
Community College Humanities Association  
Federation of State Humanities Councils  
George Washington University  
History of Science Society  
Independent Research Libraries Association  
Linguistic Society of America  
Medieval Academy of America  
Midwest Modern Language Association  
Modern Language Association  
National Council of Teachers of English  
Philological Association of the Pacific Coast  
Popular Culture Association  
Renaissance Society of America  
Shakespeare Association of America  
Social Science Research Council  
Society for Ethnomusicology  
Society for the History of Technology  
Society of Biblical Literature  
Society of Christian Ethics  
South Atlantic Modern Language Association  
South Central Modern Language Association  
Speech Communication Association  
Virginia Center for the Humanities

The **NHA** National Humanities Alliance

23 January 1989

Rex O. Arney  
General Counsel  
National Endowment for the Humanities  
1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Room 530  
Washington, DC 20506

COPY

Dear Mr. Arney:

The National Humanities Alliance very much appreciates the invitation from Lynne Cheney to contribute our comments for consideration in preparing the Endowment's proposal for the upcoming reauthorization of the National Foundation for the Arts and the Humanities Act. We are pleased to have the opportunity to offer suggestions on steps we believe could advance the cause of the humanities in the United States.

As I mentioned during the meeting with you, Jason Hall, and Stephen Cherrington earlier this month, we have sought to identify problems for which the reauthorization process may offer a special opportunity for resolution. In identifying issues of concern to us, we have not considered in detail how change might be accomplished (i.e., whether they could best be addressed through changes in the statute, inclusion of report language, initiation of changes by the agency without Congressional action, or a combination of such approaches). Please understand that these are preliminary suggestions since NHA members are continuing to offer comments and may be expected to continue to do so as the process moves forward. At this point, I am able to report that the Alliance has identified two areas in which we propose changes. In addition, there are two other areas in which we believe discussion would be appropriate and that from such discussions may emerge future suggestions for change.

1. NEH policy formulation and the public - In the spirit of the Chairman's request, our first suggestion is that public participation in the consideration of changes in Endowment policies should be enhanced. While most of the concerns here are focused on the process through which program guidelines are reviewed and modified, the concern extends to changes in any of NEH's policies that affect the way the Endowment carries out its mission. (I hasten to add here that we do not envision or advocate changes in the Chairman's authority to set policies. Our concern is that the public have more systematic opportunity to comment before policy changes are decided.)

NEH policy review process could be strengthened by a) publishing notice of contemplated changes in guidelines in the Federal Register with requests for public comment, b) regularly scheduling with advance notice public discussion of issues of

Rex O. Arney  
23 January 1989  
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concern at open meetings of the National Council on the Humanities, perhaps in some instances with the opportunity for the interested public to speak; and c) continuation of other means of communication such as correspondence with interested individuals and organizations.

2. Data collection and dissemination in the humanities - As our second suggestion, we urge an expanded system of data collection and dissemination in the humanities. As you know, Congress included in the 1985 amendments an outline of the kinds of information that the legislators felt would be necessary for future decision making on the Endowments programs. Section 7(k) of the NFAH Act reads in part:

"[NEH shall] in consultation with State and local agencies, other relevant organizations, and relevant Federal agencies, develop a practical system of national information and data collection on the humanities, scholars, educational, and cultural groups, and their audiences. Such system shall include cultural and financial trends in the various humanities fields, trends in audience participation, and trends in humanities education on national, regional, and State levels... [and goes on to call for inclusion of the following kinds of information in biennial state of the humanities reports] the availability of the Endowment's programs to emerging and culturally diverse scholars, cultural and educational organizations, and communities and of the participation of such scholars, organizations, and communities in such programs... "

The Alliance endorses the Congressional formulation of the scope of federal interest in data in these areas. We wish it could be carried out more fully in the future with expanded involvement of the field. We are particularly concerned that the NEH's system of direct collection and coordination with data activities of other agencies will be informed by regular consultation with humanities educators. For we believe that it is through the latter that the system can yield information that most fully reflects the special circumstances of the humanities enterprise.

Perhaps, a standing advisory committee on humanities statistics should be established with a membership selected from among those federal and private organizations most centrally concerned with data collection and dissemination in the humanities.

3. Review of NEH policies on support for graduate education - Our third suggestion is that NEH invite the public to participate in a review of support for graduate education in the humanities. We envision the outcome of such a review as either reconfirming

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23 January 1989  
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the appropriateness of the long-standing NEH policy against providing support for research or other activities in pursuit of an academic degree, or as encouraging NEH to expand its portfolio of support programs to include dissertation fellowships and/or other forms of support for graduate students. I hasten to point out that NHA has arrived at no position on this issue, only that it has been raised as a problem in our community.

Support for graduate students in the humanities, especially for the dissertation writing phase, has long been viewed by higher education leaders, scholars, and others as inadequate. Progress made in the 1960s in broadening federal opportunities for humanities students has not been maintained in recent years. When contrasted with the resources available to students in the physical, biomedical, and social sciences, available support for students in the humanities is meager indeed. Research in the sciences commonly involves extensive use of research and laboratory assistants (often in paid positions that directly support work on dissertation topics). This is not a common pattern in the humanities. The Javits Fellowship program at the Department of Education has somewhat ameliorated the general problem but, with its eligibility restricted to students who have earned fewer than 20 credits, is not available to students at the dissertation stage;

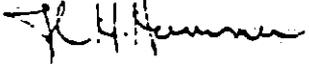
While we urge discussion of support for graduate education during the reauthorization process, we also recognize that even within the Alliance's constituency there are conflicting issues to be considered. For example, if provision for support for a graduate fellowship program or other mechanism(s) at NEH were to be introduced in connection with the reauthorizing legislation, we would want it tied to a higher authorized funding level. There is a strong consensus that introducing graduate support through reduction in support for advanced scholarship would be counterproductive.

4. Operating support for institutions - Finally, I want to apprise you of an issue that is still very much in a formative stage, but which we believe should be discussed as a question for the public agenda and which could be raised in connection with reauthorization at some point during the coming months. That question concerns whether a program should be established that could provide operating support to private humanities organizations along the lines of the Institute of Museum Services? Such a program could operate either as an activity within NEH or as a separate entity operating under the umbrella of the National Foundation for the Arts and the Humanities (a la IMS). Again, I emphasize that the Alliance does not have a position on this matter but that it is a question being raised and discussed in our community.

Rex O. Arney  
23 January 1989  
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In closing, we thank you and Mrs. Cheney for this opportunity to comment on the issues of concern to our members in the reauthorization of the Endowment. My colleagues and I would be pleased to meet with you to discuss further the issues raised in this letter.

Yours sincerely,



John H. Hammer  
Director

Statement of Sidney Verba  
University Librarian, Professor of Government,  
and Carl H. Pforzheimer University Professor  
at Harvard University

Speaking on behalf of  
Association of Research Libraries  
Commission on Preservation and Access  
and  
National Humanities Alliance

On the Fiscal Year 1990 Appropriation for  
the National Endowment for the Humanities

Before the Subcommittee on the Interior and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U. S. House of Representatives

22 March 1989

My name is Sidney Verba. I am the Director of the Harvard University Library and a Professor of Government at Harvard. It is a pleasure to testify before you today on behalf of the Association of Research Libraries, the Commission on Preservation and Access, and the National Humanities Alliance. I want to comment on the program on book preservation of the National Endowment for the Humanities from three perspectives: the perspective of someone involved in the general welfare of scholarship and learning in America and in the welfare of its basic resource, the library; the perspective of the Director of the nation's largest university library; and the perspective of a scholar, active for thirty years in research.

Scholarship and Learning in America: I became Director of the Harvard University Library about five years ago. I am a political scientist, not a professional librarian. At the time, I, along with most of my colleagues on the faculty, had no sense of the magnitude of the "brittle books" problem. We had all seen brittle books, but the problem had never been presented to us in its full magnitude. I soon learned that this was one of the most serious, potentially tragic, and seemingly intractable problems faced by libraries.

The problem of our disappearing record seemed beyond solution. It was of such a magnitude that one could only imagine working around its edges. To deal with the matter comprehensively would require a level of resources beyond that

which the various research libraries could muster and a degree of coordination that seemed beyond the capacity of our diverse institutions. Yet with the leadership of the National Endowment, with the encouragement of the Association of Research Libraries, the Commission on Preservation and Access, the National Humanities Alliance and other groups, and with the support of the Congress we appear to be moving to a solution.

The increased funding that has gone into the preservation of brittle books has made it possible for us to anticipate that much of what is at risk of destruction will now be saved. The National Endowment's program provides the essential resources for this task. It does not, nor is it intended to, provide all the needed resources for the task. We in the library world continue to seek funds elsewhere and to use the resources of our own institutions for these purposes. But the NEH funding creates the base on which we build.

Our heritage is decentralized among the Library of Congress, the National Library of Medicine, and the National Agricultural Library, over a hundred research libraries at universities and other institutions as well as libraries and archives at a number of colleges, historic organizations, and other public and private institutions. Longstanding cooperative relationships among these institutions make coordination of preservation efforts possible. The NEH program also supports important efforts that encourage and supplement the activities of individual libraries.

To encourage libraries to contribute effectively to this national preservation effort, NEH funded the Association of Research Libraries to undertake with the Library of Congress a project to create machine readable records of existing preservation microfilm masters. The availability of these records will minimize duplication of effort among the libraries participating in the brittle book program. Also with NEH funding, ARL conducts a Preservation Planning Program for libraries to encourage the development of local preservation strategies that contribute to the national effort. ARL has also just concluded a project that has resulted in an inventory of collection strengths among research libraries in North America, an important base of information for preservation selection strategies.

If we are to solve this problem, we have to work as a synchronized, coordinated whole -- dividing up the task in a meaningful way so as to maximize the resources we have. NEH's leadership is creating that program. We can move ahead at Harvard with major preservation projects in the knowledge that our work will complement rather than duplicate that of other libraries.

The leadership of the Commission on Preservation and Access is also vital in developing plans for one of the most difficult tasks we face; the selection of materials to be preserved. Through its sponsorship of committees of expert scholars from

various disciplines, we will be able to mobilize the scholarly community to aid in this task. The Commission plays a critical, catalytic role to convene informal task forces to focus on solutions to particular problems, to address issues of international concern, to support research and demonstration projects, and to provide important communication functions.

The NEH program goes well beyond the preservation of these materials. It also represents the beginning of the development of a true national research collection. Such a national collection will mean that nineteenth and early twentieth century books will no longer be available only in those major libraries with old and deep collections such as my own. At present, we are discussing a national center for the distribution of microform materials to whoever wants them. Such a center would facilitate a national collection. The rich historical collections that were on Harvard's shelves -- and accessible only by travelling to Cambridge -- will be equally available to scholars all over the country. The NEH program will not only preserve our heritage for the nation, it will make it accessible to the nation.

Harvard and the National Program: Rarely has a program caught on as quickly as the NEH program. I can describe this best from the perspective of my own library, but I know the situation is paralleled in many other libraries. It is a program for which we have been waiting. We had talked of our problems and we had bemoaned our fate. And we had, in fact, done a good deal on preservation. We had, with our resources, with federal

resources, and with private resources, filmed over 16 million pages of fragile materials. But we were ready to do more. We, therefore, have applied to the NEH program for a substantial project in several crucial areas of our broad collection. The subjects are varied -- materials from our rich collections in European history, from our unparalleled collections in the history of law, and from our unique collections on American social history. We could have selected other subjects, and over the years we intend to do so. What we film will depend on where our collection strength lies and what others are filming. But the important thing is that we will be adding to a national endeavor. That fact energizes our efforts for we can see a real payoff in adding our work to that of others.

I want to stress the secondary impact of the NEH program. It will do more than support a vast amount of filming in those institutions that receive funding under the program. If the experience at other institutions is like that at Harvard, it will stimulate many other preservation activities. In our planning for the NEH program, we have redesigned our organizational capacity for preservation, a redesign that will allow us to meet the challenge of the new level of work. And we have directed our efforts at fundraising with our supporters and alumni toward the task of preservation. The prospect of NEH funding, rather than reducing our commitment to raise additional funds, has increased it. I believe many other institutions are having similar experiences with the NEH program.

A Look at Preservation from my Own Discipline: Much of the discussion of the preservation problem is based on statistics. Sometimes the discussion is punctuated by the demonstration of a crumbled book. I would like to go beyond the abstract statistics or the illustration of a randomly selected book to show how an entire field of endeavor can be endangered by the crumbling of our library resources. For this, I'll turn to my own area of research.

I am a political scientist and the author or co-author of more than fifteen books in the field. The main focus of my research has been on the political and civic involvement of the public -- how ordinary citizens take part in political and civic life. It is a subject that goes, I believe, to the heart of our democracy. The citizenry is sovereign in America. I have tried in my research to study the extent to which it exercises that sovereignty and how it does so. The work has, I believe, received scholarly recognition and has had an impact on how we understand our political life. Several of the books have won prizes. I am, on the basis of this work, one of less than a dozen political scientists elected to the National Academy of Sciences.

Most of my work is on recent American political life. One interesting and somewhat distressing fact about recent citizen participation has been the sharp decline in voting turnout in the past two decades -- from almost 64 percent in the 1960 election

elections. The decline is even more dramatic when we consider that voting turnout should have been going up, given the fact that we have a more educated populace and that many of the barriers to voting have been eased in the last twenty years.

In looking into that problem, my attention and the attention of other scholars, has turned to an earlier period of voting decline around the turn of the century. In the late nineteenth century, voting turnout in presidential elections was in the 75-80 percent range; by the 1920's it fell to the 50 percent range--lower than today. Why did this happen? To answer the question, scholars have turned to study the changing nature of American elections and the American party system from the end of the Civil War through the early part of the twentieth century.

This is not the place to discuss the history of the American party system -- we are here to talk about brittle books. The point is that the written record of this era --the party histories, the campaign documents, the candidate biographies, the local party accounts -- are on acid paper. And much of the material is reaching the end of its shelf life. I will bring some examples to the hearing.

This era is crucial for understanding our current political process. The changes that took place from the Civil War through the beginning of the twentieth century, many of the changes associated with the Progressive era, created the modern American state and the modern American party system. We cannot lose our

knowledge of that period -- even if it is on paper laced with acid. The NEH program will prevent that from happening.

Conclusion: If what differentiates humans from other species is the ability to use language, and if what differentiates civilization from pre-civilized forms of life is the ability to record that language by written words, then it follows that our essence as humans is contained in the written words we pass from generation to generation. These written words, entrusted to library collections, are turning to dust -- and with that part of our lives is going as well.

The small illustration I have given from my own research area shows but a corner of the problem. The record of scientific discoveries, the writings of scholars about their own age and the past, the recordings of lives, the descriptions of society, the products of creative imagination expressed in poetry and prose -- all will disappear unless we persevere in our efforts. The Congress must offer continuing support.

The Association of Research Libraries is an organization of 119 major research institutions committed to strengthening and extending the capacities of research libraries to contribute to the institutional mission. Members include the larger university libraries, the national libraries of the United States and Canada, and a number of public and special libraries with substantial research collections.

The Commission on Preservation and Access is a privately funded agency established to foster collaboration among libraries and other organizations to insure the preservation of published and documentary records and provide enhanced access to scholarly information.

The National Humanities Alliance is an organization of 54 scholarly and professional humanities associations, organizations of museums, libraries, historical societies, higher education institutions, and state humanities councils. NHA's purpose is to advance the cause of the humanities by promoting the common interests of its members with regard to national policy, programs, and legislation.