The Maine Humanities Council—a statewide nonprofit organization—enriches the lives of Mainers through literature, history, philosophy and culture. Our programs, events, grants and online resources encourage critical thinking and conversation across social, economic and cultural boundaries.

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Call for Nominations

The Maine Humanities Council seeks to expand its list of potential nominees to fill future openings on its Board of Directors. The Council seeks a wide geographic representation and range of civic and/or academic experience. To notify the Council of your interest, please send a letter and a résumé to:

Governance Committee Chair
Maine Humanities Council
674 Brighton Avenue
Portland, ME 04102-1012

We dedicate this issue to Carolyn Sloan; see page 10.

Would you like to explore questions of the human experience through a myriad of perspectives with the Maine Humanites Council?
In January I went to a reading by Maine’s Poet Laureate, Wesley McNair. Wes was reading from his new memoir, and he spoke, in part, about the power of poetry to express feeling and connect individuals with the broader human experience. As Poet Laureate, one thing he’s working to do is to restore the connection between poetry and the broad public that is its rightful audience, a connection that has become strained.

It’s no coincidence that Wes is such a good friend of the Maine Humanities Council. We, too, are in the business of building connections. Our work revolves in large part around helping Mainers to connect with their communities, their histories, and their neighbors.

You’ll read about some of these connections in this Annual Report, and I hope you’ll be inspired by the exciting work going on throughout the state. To take just a few examples from 2012…

The Council helped to fund The Hero Project, in North Berwick. Over the course of the school year, 85 high school students studied historical and literary texts about the nature of morality and heroism. They identified 21 individuals from their community who exemplify what it means to be a hero, and they wrote about these individuals. The culmination of the Project was a luncheon where the community came together and the students presented their work.

We initiated a statewide partnership with the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence and other domestic violence agencies to begin work on a program (described on the back cover) to bring Mainers together for a shared theater experience and community discussion around the difficult issue of domestic violence in Maine.

In partnership with the local Kiwanis Club, the Council funded a seminar in Dexter for parents of pre-kindergarten children and provided three new children’s books to every attendee to help and encourage the children of that town as they “begin their literary journey.”

Of course, the ongoing regular programs of the Council continued in 2012 to make connections in important ways. New Books, New Readers scholar Elizabeth Cooke described the experience of her Farmington program’s low-literacy adults:

This series offered an experience of empowerment to the participants: they saw their own experiences reflected in the lives of the characters; our participants have not been alone…. I have seen [participants’] skills improve, however slowly and with small successes. Several who were unable to try to read a line aloud several years ago now make it through a paragraph, reading with pride, and smiling when the others in the group applauded these small steps forward. For some participants, this has been the main social activity of the month; for most, the central educational experience of the year.

There’s a key premise underlying everything the Council does: gathering people together to read, share, talk, and think together makes a difference. Engagement with the humanities is an essential part of a human life well lived. This is not an elitist notion. On the contrary, the humanities get to the heart of what binds all of us together, regardless of age, reading ability, or station in life. It’s not simply that the humanities enrich our lives—though certainly they do. Just as important, the humanities have real-world benefits. Robust public engagement with the humanities strengthens our communities and makes us better able to face the problems and challenges we must address together.

Through the humanities, we can harness the power of human connection to help understand our past and shape our common future. I believe there’s nothing more important we could be doing.

Enjoy this Annual Report. I hope you’ll find inspiration in the stories of Council programs and grants throughout Maine’s 16 counties, made possible through the support and partnership of the generous individuals and institutions you’ll see listed within. We are very proud of the Council’s accomplishments in the past year, we’re thankful for your support, and we’re excited and energized about the connections we can make and the impact we can have in 2013 and beyond.

Hayden Anderson, PhD
Executive Director
I have been teaching in colleges and universities since 1977, first in Connecticut and for the past 28 years in Maine. While I have taught a number of undergraduate courses in sociology, gerontology, and a travel-based summer course on baseball and American Society, most of my work has been at the graduate level in the Department of Counseling, Adult and Higher Education at the University of Southern Maine. It was after a keynote address I gave at an Adult Education Conference in New Hampshire in 2006, a talk in which I reflected on implications of Mary Oliver’s poem “The Journey” for adult learning, that I met Julia Walkling. “I see that you are a humanities man,” Julia said as she introduced herself. My involvement with New Books, New Readers began less than six months later.

“Try to talk a little less.”

— Julia Walkling, Program Officer, New Books, New Readers
even in an environment as ripe for genuine discussion as New Books, New Readers.

Over the next several years working with New Books, New Readers, I con-
sciously took Julia’s feedback to heart and tried to use fewer words and be-
come the valley in the landscape. I learned over time that listening is a rare and difficult, albeit lovely, virtue in teaching and one that is integrally related to other important virtues. For example, listening relies on patience (yes—I may think I know the answer to the question I just posed, but it’s much better to allow one of the learners to express this answer). As the great German Lyric Poet Rainer Rilke was fond of saying in his letters about art, love and other important matters, “patience is everything!” And if this mantra applies anywhere, it applies to teaching.

Listening both requires and engenders empathy. How can we understand what our students think and feel unless they express themselves? And how can they express themselves if we, their teachers, don’t allow ample space in the discussion for their voices to be welcomed and then truly listen to those voices when they speak?

Listening also requires among the most difficult of virtues for some teachers, perhaps especially college professors: humility. Being the valley in the landscape is not easy for scholars who have doctoral degrees, publish books and articles, and who even get occasional invitations to deliver keynote addresses out-of-state. But we can’t listen well without at least some degree of humility, and we can’t teach well, that is, really well, without listening.

There are several ways I now try to listen more effectively in New Books, New Readers. First, whenever I ask a question, I count to 10 in my head before I utter another word. It’s so easy to instantly jump into the silence and answer one’s own question, a habit in which I was well-practiced. I also use small exercises such as asking students to create mind-maps or write a “One Minute Paper” in which they can summarize their impressions of a book or jot down feelings about the main concepts we have been discussing. Students are always invited but never compelled to share their mind-maps or one-minute papers with the rest of the group.

In recent years I believe I have become a better teacher because I have worked to turn down the volume of my own voice and turn up the volume of my students’ voices. New Books, New Readers has been a watershed experience in this regard. There is so much to learn from the immigrant from Somalia who overcame a myriad of political and economic barriers to make his way to America; from the 50-year-old woman who never learned to read but now has motivation to do so because she has just become a grandmother and wants to be able to read to this child, something she was never able to do with her own children; and from the county jail inmate who, because of one terrible mistake, has lost his freedom, is separated from family, and has serious work to do to repair relationships in what has become an interrupted life. I learn from these fascinating people by listening.

I am grateful that, way back when I first began as a Humanities Scholar with New Books, New Readers, I listened well to those six words of feedback from Julia. Because I did, I am a better teacher today.

E. Michael Brady is Professor of Adult and Higher Education at the University of Southern Maine and also serves as Senior Research Fellow at USM’s Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. He is also a regular MHC scholar/facilitator.
Inspiring. Amazing. Incredible.... An endless ribbon of words would do nicely to describe my past eight years on the board of the Maine Humanities Council. But, if I really had to choose only one word to express what it was like to serve on one of the most outstanding boards in Maine and the nation, what it was like to be ushered into the heart of the humanities, and what it was like to feel, see, and touch the diversity of our state, I’d choose the word “transformative.”

We’re all inclined to exaggerate from time to time, but for me, this is on-the-ground truth: my experience with the Council has been life-changing. In 1997, I moved to the St. John Valley in northern Maine from Canada, plunging soon after my arrival into cultural development. My first connection with the Council was as an earnest applicant seeking funds to support a variety of humanities-based initiatives in this rural, underserved part of the state. Over the years, other regional and state development efforts brought me into contact with the Council. By 2005, I was elected to the board and my immersion began.

Soon into my tenure, it became pretty clear to me why the Council is such an effective organization. It is unwaveringly faithful to sound structure and policy, balanced with reflective planning and strategic action. I took my responsibilities as a board member seriously, but I’d be disingenuous to say that my time wasn’t punctuated with lots of healthy doses of bellyaching laughter. Along with skills in fundraising, organizational development, financial management, and boundless literary and scholarly abilities, my fellow board members were incredibly funny and endlessly engaging. I made many
new friends and delighted in countless illuminating conversations. Three times a year for eight years, I traveled up, down, and across the state for board meetings and then several additional times for other humanities events. Every place brought a new story and the gift of another sweet memory. The salty summer air in Castine is now a part of me, along with the tormented winter waters in South Portland, and the crispy sound of autumn’s fallen leaves in Lewiston. I also remember the school gymnasium in the town of Steuben filled to capacity to celebrate a little girl’s award-winning letter of the Council’s Letters About Literature program. I was so excited to be there with the entire community to honor her achievement. And the gathering of local residents in Bar Harbor, where we explored how the humanities can be part of the solution when small communities tackle challenges like consolidation or loss of identity.

In northern Maine, my interest was to increase opportunities for the Council’s exceptional programs. So I helped encourage a stronger presence of Let’s Talk About It, one of its signature programs, and organize events such as the community discussion What do Borders Mean? Other humanities moments included an award-winning theatrical performance about the history of taxation in Maine (of all things!); an international gathering of artists, historians, and community activists; and an unforgettable evening with Wesley McNair, Maine’s Poet Laureate. With a sense of privilege, I was given the chance to glimpse into the vastness of the human spirit, with its companion triumphs and struggles. All of these experiences, in every part of Maine, sparked my path. It was enormously fulfilling to hear how Council programs and grants made a direct, relevant, and significant difference in people’s daily lives. I am proud to have been part of ensuring the Council’s commitment to serving all of Maine.

I am grateful. I am grateful for being able to sit at the table with such smart, creative, and kind people to build a better Maine through the humanities. And grateful for how my experience enriched me as a professional and as a volunteer on other nonprofit boards and committees. I’ve come to better understand what humanities means—to me, that is. I’ve discovered that it’s not complicated, really—it’s about exploring what is true, no matter what “it” is, and being solidly and stead-

“It was enormously fulfilling to hear how Council programs and grants made a direct, relevant, and significant difference in people’s daily lives.”
FOR ME, it’s always been about stories. But it hasn’t always been about patients.

I didn’t grow up wanting to be a doctor. In high school and in college, I pursued my passions for writing, literature, and East Asian Studies. After graduation, I chose to chase a career in journalism and began by writing an article for *Synapse* (the eZine for the Maine Humanities Council’s *Literature & Medicine* program) on recent changes in the doctor-patient relationship. My appreciation for the healthcare profession notwithstanding, it took me several years to forge my own relationship with science and medicine. By the time I started medical school at age 28, I was convinced that all the qualities I most valued about myself—compassion, conscientiousness, curiosity—would best be spent serving patients, not readers. But by the end of my first year, I felt tired and overwhelmed—a shell of my former self. I longed to trade in my textbooks for novels, my medical journals for magazines. I wondered whether I’d made a huge mistake.

As good fortune would have it, I had arranged to spend that following summer evaluating the success of the *Literature & Medicine*: Humanities at the Heart of Health Care® program at newly participating VA Medical Centers (VAMCs). Over the course of two months, I conducted interviews and focus groups with program participants across 14 sites. I heard testimony from healthcare providers who reported significant increases in colleague camaraderie and openness, empathy and compassion toward patients, appreciation and understanding of different perspectives, general morale and satisfaction with one’s work, and motivation to do better at one’s job. The program also demonstrated far-reaching effects: interviewees described sharing their thoughts and readings with non-participating staff members and even patients. And an overwhelming 100 percent of participants endorsed the program and expressed interest in both expansion and future participation.

For those of us familiar with *Literature & Medicine*, this was not surprising. After all, the program—a hospital-based facilitator-led reading and discussion group for hospital staff members—had been demonstrating the same outcomes at non-VAMCs since its inception in 1997. In order to understand and best serve their patients, healthcare professionals cannot rely solely on their own academic knowledge and life experiences. Patients not only present their complaints and indications; they also bring to the clinic their cultural backgrounds, religious and spiritual beliefs, and personal histories—of the medical and non-medical kind. This is especially true at a VAMC, where a large gulf exists between the patients (who have all served in the military) and their healthcare providers (who for the most part are non-veterans.) Tools offered by a program like *Literature & Medicine*—which uses literature as a proxy for experiencing things like war, illness, and death—seem uniquely suited to help providers empathize with patients who return from service not only physically and emotionally wounded, but feeling as though no one can possibly understand what they’ve been through. Consider the following quote from one participant, who happened to be a veteran himself:

> Usually I go into a patient’s room and unless they know I’ve served in the military, I have real difficulty reaching them. There’s a strong bond among our patient population—a common experience, which you won’t find at a [community] hospital. Here, our patients aren’t just bodies to be cared for; they are people who have helped protect our country. You don’t have to be in the military to understand this, but you have to be around it to appreciate what it means to serve. The readings help bolster that understanding.

“It also reconfirmed my feeling that literature and reflection are vital components in a robust medical education curriculum…”
Another participant—a non-veteran—echoed this sentiment:

I think the program is especially important for non-veteran providers because they say that unless you’ve walked in a soldier’s shoes, you can’t possibly get it. Literature puts something concrete in our hands. Otherwise, it would be like me trying to describe what it’s like to live on Mars. That’s our vets’ frustration: that we can’t relate to them. The ‘You can’t treat one unless you’ve been one’ philosophy. The literature helps us connect a little more.

I learned so much that summer. Working with participants of Literature & Medicine was inspiring, reenergizing and validating. It also reconfirmed my feeling that literature and reflection are vital components in a robust medical education curriculum and, on a personal level, proved to me that it was feasible to incorporate my humanities background into my newly chosen career.

I returned to medical school that fall more committed than ever to advocating for programs like Literature & Medicine—in medical school, residency, and beyond.

It’s hard to believe I’m nearing the end of medical school, yet as I write this I have just finished the long process of interviewing for residency. Medical school has been hard—certainly the most difficult endeavor I’ve ever undertaken—and there have been moments when I’ve been nostalgic for my former life. But at the end of the day, the worlds of medicine and journalism have much in common. Every day we healthcare providers are surrounded by stories— incredible stories. We are asked to observe patients, ask them questions, listen to their tales, and report back to our colleagues. We get to meet interesting people and raise awareness of important issues—all under deadline no less. Unlike journalism, the work doesn’t stop there but just begins.

Throughout medical school, I’ve endeavored to figure out how to turn my passion for stories into a profession of healing. Literature & Medicine helped me realize that I don’t have to choose between the two.

Abigail Cutler is a fourth-year medical student at the Pritzker School of Medicine at the University of Chicago. She is pursuing a residency in Obstetrics & Gynecology. Her writing has appeared in The Atlantic and The Christian Science Monitor.

Abigail Cutler’s Featured Article in the very first issue of Synapse, the eZine of the Literature & Medicine program, MAINEHUMANITIES.ORG/PROGRAMS/LITANDMED/SYNAPSE

Simply Listening
by Abigail Cutler :: bio

Dr. Lawrence Cutler, Chief of Medical Service at Eastern Maine Medical Center in Bangor from 1948-1968, was known for his remarkable bedside manner—a reflection less of his communication skills than his habit of visiting his patients’ actual bedsides. It was not uncommon for my grandfather to get up in the middle of the night and drive hours across the state to make a house call. (Once, after hours of late-night travel, he found himself hopelessly lost and realized, to his surprise, “I’m in Canada!”—not because he asked pointed questions, but because he was able to tell the tomahawk-shaped geographic background, but...
Abandoned schools, unused buildings, sometimes just a basement: these are often the birthplaces of rural libraries. What a community might see as a useless structure can be a golden start for a book-centered community organization as long as a person with a vision is involved.

Faye O’Leary Hafford did this in Allagash, creating a library with her namesake from a classroom in an abandoned school. Jackie Ayotte began the Long Lake Public Library in St. Agatha in a few rooms as a collaboration with her local historical society. Both are now bustling centers of community activity within towns of fewer than 300 and 800 residents, respectively.

And both are regular partners of Let’s Talk About It, the MHC’s free reading and discussion program. Let’s Talk About It serves all of Maine, provides an in-depth cultural experience for community members while helping a library become recognized as a crucial community center.

It’s hard for a rural library to start a public program, especially a new library. Will anyone besides nine friends come? Do people in the community want to commit to a four-session reading series? Will the facilitator click with the audience? Is it too much work to expect of a volunteer staff?

Faye and Jackie probably had these worries, but both gave Let’s Talk About It a chance and now are among our most stalwart partners.

The MHC listens to and finds solutions to rural libraries’ fears. We prove how valuable the program is through encouraging librarians to talk together about it (this is how Faye got started, having heard from Jackie that offering the program wasn’t as hard as it might seem), by tempting librarians with fascinating series (“Defining Wilderness: Defining Maine” and “So Near and So Far: An Exploration of Cuban Literature” are especially popular ones), and by always being available to answer questions, offer advice, or simply listen at any point of the process. In fact, Lizz Sinclair, Program Director, who manages Let’s Talk About It, got to know Faye and Jackie quite well by phone so that hugs were clearly the next thing coming when they actually met in person.

Behind the scenes, too, Lizz helps librarians choose the right series, making recommendations from our list of 48 based on their goals for their communities. She also chooses the perfect scholar/facilitator from within our roster of statewide intellectual talent. (Indeed, librarians often grow very attached to theirs.)

And funding, of course, is the final object in this picture. We’re very fortunate to have had a three-year grant from the Betterment Fund (ended in 2012) that supported Let’s Talk About It in rural libraries statewide. With additional support from donors—many of whom were Let’s Talk About It participants themselves—we reached 29 rural libraries in 2012 alone, with audiences ranging from 9 to 32 in our most rural sites.

Thanks to foundation funding and thanks to our donors, together we’ve been able to engage communities throughout the state in thoughtful, fun, and meaningful discussions with one another, exploring (as a participant in Albion wrote) “a range and depth of ideas and stories of what makes us human.”

To become the library where such thoughts are inspired is a worthy future indeed, for a once-abandoned space.
Letters About Literature is a national project sponsored by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress in partnership with the Maine Humanities Council. Support for this program is provided by the David Royte Fund and the Library of Congress.

In Letters About Literature, students write to an author—living or dead—about how that author’s work changed them somehow. Students write about their relationships with the author’s characters or themes and often describe how they have grown as a result of these connections. In 2012, Maine had 117 entries from students across the state, grades 4–12, judged by a panel of humanities representatives.

**LEVEL I WINNERS (GRADES 4–6)**

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<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Excerpt:</th>
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<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Brooklin School, Brooklin</td>
<td>Your books taught me that girls aren’t just silly and useless, only fit for “women’s work” and certainly not at all good for saving the world. They taught me to take what comes at me, to not be afraid of being who I am, and to try for my dreams no matter what (or who) stands in my way. If you dare to try for what you want most, someday all your work will pay off.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Stepping Stones Montessori, Chelsea</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honorable Mention</td>
<td>Hichborn Middle School, Howland; Dora L. Small School, South Portland</td>
<td>Your books taught me to be bigger than all of the small, narrow-minded people who make fun of you because they’re afraid to do what you can. So they make themselves feel better by being mean. If you worry about all of them, you’ll spend your whole life ‘worrying about the state of your clothes whilst the armies advance.’</td>
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**LEVEL II WINNERS (GRADES 7–8)**

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<th>Place</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Excerpt:</th>
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<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Lewiston Middle School, Lewiston</td>
<td>When I think back on reading the Main Street series, I know it helped me to make it through my mom dying. I think back, and if Flora and Ruby survived both of their parents dying, even though it’s fiction, I know I can make it through this. These books inspired me to keep going, and to realize that she’s in a better place now, and that she’s happy now. I also feel that I should look on the bright side of everything and not be sad always. She was hurting on Earth, now she has no pain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Brooklin School, Brooklyn</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Honorable Mention</td>
<td>Cony High School, Augusta; Dr. Lewis S. Libby School, Milford</td>
<td>Across the table from me every Christmas Eve is my cousin Garret…. He opens his mouth to speak but no words come out; his hand gestures just say it all: “More bread,” “Pass the milk,” but these simple things never express who he really is…. Garret has a social disorder…. ...I never knew how to make a connection with him. I wanted so badly for him to just scream how he really felt, but that day never came. After reading your book, I realized that it isn’t about what others think of you; it is about how you feel inside. I’ve always been uneasy…when I had to introduce him to my friends because I never knew how they would react. As I read about Hattie and how she made such an effort to make Adam happy, it just makes me realize that there is more to life than popularity status: what really means the most is family and self-worth. Sometimes I wonder if he is happy—if he knows who we are. I want to reach out to him, make him feel loved.</td>
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**LEVEL III WINNERS (GRADES 9–12)**

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<th>Place</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Excerpt:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Scarborough High School, Scarborough</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Bangor High School, Bangor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honorable Mention</td>
<td>Scarborough High School, Scarborough</td>
<td></td>
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Carolyn Sloan shared her interest in books and ideas with the Maine Humanities Council beginning in 2002. The creator of the *Deep in a Book* and *Children and Nature* trainings for parents and early childhood educators respectively, the brains behind the *New Books, New Readers* text selections, and a beloved facilitator for several sites, Carolyn brought a broad and deep imagination to our work. She was a scholar in a classic sense.

Prior to joining the MHC, Carolyn taught Kindergarten through grade 10, focusing on curriculum design, including literacy, for grades 1-6 in an integrated classroom. As a facilitator, she worked with groups at Portland Adult Education and Biddeford Adult Education. Carolyn majored in English as an undergraduate at Duke University and did graduate work in ancient and early modern history at Memphis State University—an interest that always kept conversations with her peppered with fascinating facts. She also did graduate work in reading and education early in her teaching career and kept up her interest in linguistics by taking courses in French, Greek, German, and Latin.

Carolyn’s fascination with geography and linguistics sparked her interest in the opportunity to interact with Adult English Language Learners and to select books and discussion questions that work to help lower-level ELL students transition to English. She once described how she would perform scenes from a book and adapt them for her audience—mimicking a king in a Beauty and the Beast story for senior Sudanese and Somali refugees, and swiftly realizing that a crown and a scepter wouldn’t do—it was amazing how she could facilitate a powerful book discussion for people who didn’t speak the same language.

Sadly, Carolyn passed away in early December after a long and courageous struggle against leukemia. Carolyn’s energy, laughter, curiosity, and wisdom benefited all of us at the MHC. She will be missed by many but will be remembered by many, too, each time we read and each time we think of the worlds she loved most.

**IN MEMORIAM**

CAROLYN SLOAN

8.1.48 – 12.11.12

*The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled. Each evening we see the sun set. We know that the earth is turning away from it. Yet the knowledge, the explanation, never quite fits the sight.*

– John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*

EXERCISE

1. Glance at this (or another) image for 5–10 seconds (which is longer than you probably look at most images). Make a list of what you see.

2. Put two minutes on your timer and look at the same image for 120 seconds. Make a list of what you see.

If you are interested in making a gift to the MHC in Carolyn’s memory, please visit our website [www.mainehumanities.org](http://www.mainehumanities.org) or contact Diane Magras, Director of Development, at diane@mainehumanities.org, 1-866-637-3233 x208, or 207-773-5051 x208.
JOHN BERGER’S seminal text, *Ways of Seeing*, was first published in 1972 as a companion piece to a four-part BBC series of the same title. It quickly became an important foundational reading for those who study and teach visual culture and art history. In the above quote, Berger expresses a fundamental conundrum in the teaching and understanding of visual literacy—the unsettled relationship between what we see and what we know. In its most basic definition, visual literacy is the ability to understand, create, and use visual images. Thus, the visually literate person is aware of a whole host of “ways of seeing.” Ways of seeing and understanding can (and should) be taught and cultivated among students of any age, from pre-K and early childhood to adult learners.

We live in an overwhelmingly visual world. From the moment we wake up, many of us are bombarded with images of all kinds—on the television, the computer screen, in newspapers and magazines, and even on our smartphones and tablets as we scroll through emails, Facebook posts and Instagram feeds. We are used to looking at images quickly as they flood before us daily at an often breakneck pace. The first step then, to teaching and acquiring visual literacy, is to slow down our gaze. To really see and begin to understand the object or image in front of us, we must take the time to really look at it, and really looking requires more than a glance.

Try the exercise indicated at bottom. Finished? How much more detail did you become aware of when you spent two minutes gazing at an image? Did two minutes feel like an eternity? It takes time to see and to understand. It’s also important to withhold judgment and to first describe just what you see (and not what you think the image is about or trying to communicate). Look at shapes, colors, compositions, patterns—take it all in. First list visual facts, not interpretations. Then, only after you’ve objectively described what’s before you, begin to think about audience, intention, and meaning. As an historian, I also encourage my students to place images in their historical context—what was going on at the time that can help us to better understand the meaning of an image for those who first viewed it? Does the image mean something different to us?

Finally, when teaching visual literacy, it is extremely important to keep in mind perspective and perception. Young children see objects and shapes. As they develop, they begin to discern concepts and relationships from images. When we look at an image, we do not all see the same thing. This seems like a simple statement, but it bears thinking about. Perception is key. For instance, visual images are filtered through our perception, which can differ on account of our age, gender, race, culture, socio-economic background, and past life experiences. Visual literacy is an important skill set for thriving in our 21st-century world. But to acquire these skills, we must first slow down and really look at what’s in front of us.

Libby Bischof is Assistant Professor of History at the University of Southern Maine. This is an excerpt from a talk of the same title that she gave during the MHC’s “Introduction to Visual Literacy: Strategies for ‘Reading’ Art” at Bowdoin College on October 13, 2012.
FOR YEARS, most fourth-graders in Maine could tell you the story of Donn Fendler, the twelve-year-old who was stranded on Katahdin for more than a week with only his scouting skills and wits to keep him safe. For many, Fendler seemed like a real life version of Brian from Gary Paulsen’s *Hatchet*; indeed, Fendler’s own story became the basis for the classic tale of survival, *Lost on a Mountain in Maine*.

As timeless as this story is, Lynn Plourde, a Maine children’s book author and educator, was interested in revitalizing it for a modern audience. She, along with Fendler, set out to create a new, engaging version of his story of childhood bravery. They enlisted the help of Ben Bishop, a young Portland comics artist and illustrator who first gained attention for his graphic novel *Nathan the Caveman* in 2008. Lynn told the MHC that Bishop was able to turn the illustrations around in three months. The result was *Lost Trail*, a powerful graphic novel adaptation of *Lost on a Mountain in Maine*, published last year by DownEast Books.

*Lost Trail* was Lynn’s first time working on a graphic novel, and the final product proves a great example of collaboration across the artistic and storytelling arts. The MHC spoke with her about the process of adapting the story, as well as the possibilities of the graphic novel form.

Lynn told me about the challenges involved in updating such an established Maine story. “It’s a classic as well as a true story; and so, the new version needed to honor Donn Fendler’s story and get it right. But this new version also needed to have new information.” Lynn’s version of Donn’s story included new details and original Bangor Daily News headlines from the time. “It was a balancing act of honoring the ‘old’ story while adding ‘new’ information.”

That balancing act also required careful mediation between authorial voice, narration, and illustration—the process Lynn described sounded more like creating a storyboard for a film than simply retelling the story. “I’m used to writing in paragraphs. So much of the story is told through Ben’s illustrations that the words had to be pared down in places.”

Lynn’s other books are works of fiction, but Donn’s story, being a true but now distant event, was trickier to pin down. “I had the advantage of being able to interview Donn,” she said. But the challenge remained: “Creating dialogue from over 70 years ago—no one remembers exactly what was said, so I literally had to put words in Donn’s mouth.”

Creating *Lost Trail* also gave Lynn the opportunity to learn about the educational potential in comics and graphic novels. “I have been amazed at the power of graphic novels with students,” she told me. “I’ve given numerous school presentations on *Lost Trail*—how it was created and how students can write their own graphic novel scenes. Students are mesmerized. When you can hear a pin drop in a room filled with three or four classes of 5th and 6th graders, you know you’re onto something,” she said.

Educators, students, and librarians have all attested to the value of this emerging medium. “Teachers have told me that it’s the students who have
forced them to use graphic novels in the classroom. Librarians say they can’t keep graphic novels on their shelves. Students have told me that *Lost Trail* is told ‘their way’.” The graphic novel format lends itself to narrative as well as visual literacy skills, both of which are increasingly important in making students informed, skeptical consumers of media. Graphic novels and comics are increasingly being recognized not only as useful teaching tools, but as genuine works of art.

Graphic novel and comic adaptations of classic literature are popular (Lynn mentioned graphic versions of *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and *Ulysses*), and so are original stories like Art Spiegelman’s influential Holocaust graphic novel *Maus* (1991) or Marjane Satrapi’s coming of age tale set during the Iranian Revolution, *Persepolis* (2000). The medium is also quickly becoming an experimental arena for contemporary artists and writers—comics journalism, biography, travel writing, and memoir are all emerging genres.

Lynn recommended several resources for teachers interested in integrating graphic novels into their curriculum. Scott McCloud’s *Making Comics* is now a classic, as well as *Drawing Words and Writing Pictures* by Jessica Abel and Matt Madden. Her own website has activities related to *Lost Trail*, and local events like Maine Comics Festival or businesses like neighborhood comic shops are also good resources. The final authorities on comics, she reminded me, are often the students themselves.

“Teachers shouldn’t be afraid to use students as a resource — learn from them!”

*Lynn Plourde, Donn Fendler, and Ben Bishop participated in a Bangor MHC teacher program in 2012 that celebrated *Lost Trail*, created dialogue around visual literacy, and encouraged a passion for graphic novels in both students and K–12 teachers. You can find *Lost Trail* at local bookstores and online. Lynn’s website: www.lynnplourde.com. Ben Bishop’s website: www.bishart.com.*

*“When you can hear a pin drop in a room filled with three or four classes of 5th and 6th graders, you know you’re onto something.”* – Lynn Plourde, author and educator
In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the publication of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, The Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens collaborated with Maine Audubon, the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, and others to present a series of public programs on Rachel Carson, the legacy of *Silent Spring*, and her emphasis on the connectedness of all living things.

> Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens

### Portland / South Portland

$1,000 | The Longfellow Choral Festival
The Longfellow Choral Festival is held each year to celebrate the life and works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, presenting his poems set to music by major Victorian composers. This year’s festival celebrated Longfellow’s friendship with Norwegian violinist Ole Bull (1810-1880) by presenting concerts and discussions about their connections.

> The Longfellow Chorus

**FARMINGTON**

$1,000 | Shakespeare in Performance: “The Tragedies”
This two-day conference in May of last year included panels, lectures and performances for students, scholars, and general public. The conference explored stage and screen adaptations of Shakespeare’s tragedies.

> University of Maine at Farmington

### Boothbay

$500 | Rachel Carson: Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of *Silent Spring*
In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the publication of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, The Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens collaborated with Maine Audubon, the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, and others to present a series of public programs on Rachel Carson, the legacy of *Silent Spring*, and her emphasis on the connectedness of all living things.

> Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens

### Portland

$7,500 | Ovations Offstage
Grants to Portland Ovations helped support a variety of humanities-based programming, including a pre-performance lecture series, interpretive panels at Merrill Auditorium and an online exhibit to highlight the history of performing arts in Portland. This year’s programming highlighted Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*, the music of Cape Breton and Burundi, and contemporary chamber music (shown: string quartet ETHEL).

> Portland Ovations
$7,490 | Poetry Express
This project, an initiative of Maine’s Poet Laureate Wesley McNair, featured a statewide reading and listening tour highlighting the richness of contemporary poetry and its connection to the lives of citizens of all occupations, experiences, and backgrounds.
> Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance

$7,283 | N’tolonapemk: Our Ancestor’s Place
This grant helped fund museum infrastructure at the Abbe Museum, which focuses on Maine Native American art, history and archaeology. Native Americans have lived on Meddybemps Lake in Washington County for at least 8,600 years. The Passamaquoddy people have named this site N’tolonapemk, which in Passamaquoddy means, “Our Relatives’ Place.” This exhibit tells the story of N’tolonapemk through archaeological evidence (such as the fish effigy shown above) and the stories and knowledge of the Passamaquoddy people. The exhibit runs through October, 2013.
> Abbe Museum

$1,000 | L/A Film Forum
The public libraries in Lewiston and Auburn have been sharing hosting duties for the presentation of this series of contemporary independent films followed by reflective, scholar-led discussion. The screenings and discussions continue through May. Some of the films shown have included: “Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry,” a close look at the Chinese dissident artist (shown); “Question One,” a documentary on the first campaign for same-sex marriage in Maine; and “Scotland, PA,” a darkly comic reimagining of Macbeth.
> Lewiston Public Library and Auburn Public Library

$500 | Digitizing Passamaquoddy Historic Documents
The Passamaquoddy Tribal Historic Preservation Office used this grant to prepare its extensive historic collection of tribal documents for digitization. This work is in partnership with the University of New Hampshire, which plans to apply for a Preservation and Access Grant from the NEH to support digitization of regional tribal archives.
> The Passamaquoddy Tribal Historic Preservation Office

$1,000 | Voices of Light: The Passion of Joan of Arc
To commemorate the 600th anniversary of the birth of Joan of Arc (c. 1412), the Choral Art Society presented “Voices of Light: The Passion of Joan of Arc,” a multi-media project combining a silent film screening of Carl Theodor Dreyer’s classic film and a contemporary score by Richard Einhorn. The event also included a pre-performance lecture by University of Southern Maine Professor of English and medieval specialist, Kathy Ashley.
> The Choral Art Society
Maine Humanities Council Annual Fund donors make a difference for people across Maine—the scope of which can be clearly seen within the map below.

They inspire the exchange of perspectives that lead MHC program participants to a better understanding of themselves, one another, and the world. They enrich the state by supporting the programs described in this report. We are grateful for their generosity.

If you feel inspired to contribute, please fill out the enclosed envelope, or contact Diane Magras, Director of Development, at 207-773-5051, or diane@mainehumanities.org.

To all of our donors: Thank you. You really do make a difference.

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FY’12 Literature & Medicine: Humanities at the Heart of Health Care® reached 7 Maine medical centers and 22 more nationwide, with participation by over 600 health care professionals.

FY’12

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The artwork peppered throughout this section was generously donated by the respective artists to be auctioned for the benefit of the MHC’s fundraiser last fall—see the full list on page 20.

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Ashley Bryan: Hand-Painted UNO Block Print from I'm Going to Sing, Black American Spirituals, Volume Two
FY’12 Students from 57 Maine communities submitted 114 letters to *Letters About Literature.*

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**FY’12 New Books, New Readers** partnered with adult education and literacy volunteers programs in 17 Maine communities, holding 132 sessions and 31 series, reaching close to 700 low-literacy adults, English Language Learner students, and inmates at the state’s prisons and jails. Through its *New Books, New Readers* program, the MHC gave away close to 6,000 books to adults struggling to read in the State of Maine.

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Created in honor of Victoria Bonebakker, who founded Literature & Medicine at the MHC over a decade ago, the fund raised $104,614 for the program in 2012, including a $50,000 match from the estate of the program’s early facilitator Mark Weiner.

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}

LISA JAHN-CLOWGH: GOUACHE FROM ALICIA HAS A BAD DAY;
GOUACHE AND COLORED PENCIL FROM FELICITY AND CORDELIA: A TALE OF TWO BUNNIES

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One Evening in Maine
On 9/13/12, MHC supporters gathered to celebrate the legacy of Robert McCloskey’s Maine, this on the 60th anniversary of his classic work One Morning in Maine. Jane McCloskey joined us, and seven incredible Maine artists donated works to an auction that was part of this autumn fundraiser. We were grateful not only for their support, but also for their presence that night.

In-Kind (artists)
Charlotte Agell Ashley Bryan Cathryn Falwell Holly Hock & Christopher Dumaine Robert & Kathleen Flory Sheila & Philip Jodan Nancy M. Marriott Alice N. Wellman

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CHRIS VAN DUSEN: GOUACHE FROM MERCY WATSON


FY’12 Over 120 educators from 79 Maine schools attended an MHC Teacher Program.

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URING Fiscal Year 2012, the Maine Humanities Council had operating income of $1,572,763 and operating expenses of $1,329,054. Grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities made up an important component of the budget. This support was supplemented by a diverse range of other income streams, from the State of Maine, generous support from private foundations, the individual contributions highlighted in this report, and program income. Both the income and the expense figures reported in these charts and in the Council’s audited financial statements include in-kind contributions of time, mileage, and materials valued at $223,012.
JOIN US FOR PERFORMANCES…

…selections of A Streetcar Named Desire, used in a riveting performance on the topic of domestic violence by nationally acclaimed theater company Outside the Wire, commissioned by the Council.

April 16: Portland
April 17: Lewiston
April 18: Bangor

…PRESENTATIONS…

…a statewide commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, offering a full day of national and Maine-based speakers on the beginnings of the Civil War; its causes, constituencies, politics, and personalities; cultural aspects of the Civil War era; and why the War still matters to us 150 years later.

April 27: Portland

…HISTORY CAMP…

…a History Camp for 7th through 12th grade students, Digging Up the Past: Archeology and History at Colonial Fort Richmond.

June 24 – June 28: Augusta & Richmond