Portland Ballet Company and the Choral Art Society presented *The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace*, featuring singers, orchestra, and dancers performing world-premiere choreography (see grant on page 15). PHOTO: JENNIFER MALLOY AND PORTLAND BALLET
The Maine Humanities Council, a statewide non-profit organization, uses the humanities—literature, history, philosophy, and culture—as a tool for positive change in Maine communities. Our programs and grants encourage critical thinking and conversations across social, economic, and cultural boundaries.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Chair
Peter B. Webster
South Portland
Vice-chair
Patricia B. Bixel
Bangor
Treasurer
David Richards
Skowhegan
Paul Doiron
Camden
Michelle Giard Draeger
Falmouth
Daniel P. Gunn
New Sharon
Stephen Hayes
Falmouth
Joyce B. Hedlund
Newburgh
Ann L. Kibbie
Brunswick
Laura Lindenfeld
Orono
Erica Quin-Easter
Caribou
Liam Riordan
Bangor
Ted Sharp
Cumberland Foreside
Rick Speer
Lewiston
Kenneth Templeton
Brunswick
Maryanne C. Ward
Pittston

STAFF
Hayden Anderson, PhD
Executive Director
hayden@mainehumanities.org
Trudy Hickey
Office and Grants Manager
trudy@mainehumanities.org
Diane Magras
Director of Development
diane@mainehumanities.org
Gina Mitchell
Program Assistant
GINA@mainehumanities.org
Karen Myrick
Administrative Assistant/Receptionist
info@mainehumanities.org
Nicole Rancourt
Program Officer
nicole@mainehumanities.org
Anne Schlitt
Assistant Director
annes@mainehumanities.org
Elizabeth Sinclair
Director of the Harriet P. Henry Center for the Book
lizz@mainehumanities.org
Julia Walking
Program Officer
walking@mainehumanities.org
Kate Webber
Development and Communications Assistant
kate@mainehumanities.org

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 Deedee Schwartz (1938 – 2014); see page 12.

A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Would you like to explore questions of the human experience through a myriad of perspectives with the Maine Humanities?
It’s safe to say that nobody has played a greater role than Deedee Schwartz in shaping the Maine Humanities Council. Deedee served as Executive Director of the MHC from 1985 until her retirement in 2006. All of us at the Council were deeply saddened by her death in early March 2014.

When I started at the MHC in 2012, Deedee was unbelievably gracious to me, and generous with her time. She quickly became a friend and trusted advisor. But above all, she was an inspiration. As I became more deeply acquainted with the history and work of the MHC, I was continually surprised and delighted to find new examples of the long, rich history of public humanities programming in Maine: It was Deedee’s MHC that put on a statewide AIDS conference in the early days of that epidemic, Deedee’s MHC that began to explore how the humanities might be used to improve healthcare, Deedee’s MHC that continually sought new approaches to social issues through the humanities.

The best MHC programs and grants today bear the mark of those developed throughout Deedee’s years—offerings that inspire curiosity, foster conversation, and broaden horizons by engaging with other cultures and our own history, programs and grants through which the Council works to realize its vision of the communities of Maine transformed by the power and pleasure of ideas.

This vision reflects serious ambition on the part of the MHC—ambition that has its source in the energy, spirit, and hustle we inherited from Deedee Schwartz. Now, as then, the MHC believes we have an important part to play in creating the future of Maine. And we’re working hard to make sure our state is always striving to be more thoughtful and more literate; that we as a state prize critical thinking, global perspective, and full civic engagement.

It can feel paradoxical when you compare the scope of the MHC’s ambitions with the typical scale of our programs and grants. Our programs are rarely big and splashy; there’s no grand gesture that will bring the vision to reality all at once. On the contrary, it’s our conviction that the public humanities in Maine are most powerful when they’re most intimate.

What does the MHC’s work look like? In a sense, it’s the most familiar thing in the world: neighbors gathering together to read and talk with one another. But underlying this simple model are the deeply-held beliefs that critical thinking and civil conversation are skills that need to be nurtured and exercised; that historical and cross-cultural perspectives are key if we are to solve our most difficult problems; that we as human beings are at our best when we’re regularly engaged with literature and philosophy and poetry.

This annual report is an opportunity to pause and look back at 2013. For me, it’s also an opportunity to reflect on the leadership of Deedee Schwartz and the work she did to shape the Maine Humanities Council. When I think of Deedee’s legacy, and when I think about the work we have before us in 2014 and beyond, I am incredibly proud of the Council’s past accomplishments; I’m enthusiastic about our future plans, and I’m deeply grateful for your continued participation and support.

Hayden Anderson, PhD
Executive Director
IN MEMORY OF DEEDEE SCHWARTZ

On Monday, March 3, 2014, the Maine Humanities Council lost a very dear friend: Dorothy Schwartz—or Deedee, as she was known to most of us. Deedee Schwartz (1938–2014) had been Executive Director of the Maine Humanities Council from 1985 through 2006, and remained a close contact and advisor well after her retirement.

Deedee founded the model of the modern humanities council by her ambitious idea that programming should be a huge part of a council’s mission. Under her leadership, the Maine Humanities Council developed programming—including targeted grants—in literature and literacy, teacher enrichment, cultural heritage and contemporary issues that would reach Mainers of all ages, education and economic levels. Person by person, project by project, community by community, the Maine Humanities Council has touched nearly every part of the state, and Deedee made that happen.

Deedee’s vision led the Council to distinction on a national level as well, and she was held in high esteem among her colleagues at the other 55 humanities councils, where many of the Maine Humanities Council’s innovative programs had been adopted. During her tenure, the Council was the recipient of numerous Exemplary Awards from the National Endowment for the Humanities and had been honored by the American Association of State and Local History and the Federation of State Humanities Councils.

In the service of rigorous teacher enrichment programs, the Council was awarded eight major NEH grants, as well as two US Department of Education Teaching American History grants—the only grants of this kind to ever come to Maine.

Deedee inaugurated the MHC’s Harriet P. Henry Center for the Book, Maine’s state affiliate of the Library of Congress Center for the Book, and strengthened it through a successful capital campaign that allowed the Council to purchase its first permanent offices and establish a core endowment. Beyond her energetic and innovative promotion of the humanities, Deedee compiled an outstanding record of engagement in civic and cultural affairs within the state and beyond its borders.

This is a mere snapshot of Deedee Schwartz, a stalwart advocate of the humanities. Imaginative and ambitious, Deedee felt that the humanities should be available to and enjoyed by all people, a vision that the Maine Humanities Council continues to uphold. Her imagination, warmth, and constant generosity will be deeply missed by Maine Humanities Council staff, as well as by scholars, readers, program participants, other councils, humanities partners, and many more statewide and beyond.
In this age of increased interconnectedness, I often hear people express that the world feels smaller and smaller each day. Here in Maine, with our petite communities and their members’ wide ranges of interests and areas of expertise, the links between us sometimes feel so entwined it’s as though we are all playing a giant game of “Six Degrees of Separation.” Despite this notion, however, many of us also paradoxically feel increasingly isolated as active participants in the global narrative.

While there are many possible reasons for this phenomenon, perhaps discussions should focus more on how individuals and communities are responding to it. Perhaps we should instead be looking for opportunities to bring the broader international conversation into our little corners of the world. This is precisely what Rangeley Public Library Director Janet Wilson did when she partnered with the Maine Humanities Council to bring The World In Your Library: a Foreign Policy Speaking Series to her community this past summer. This pilot program, developed by the MHC in partnership with the Mid-Coast Forum on Foreign Relations, seeks to build greater understanding of foreign policy related topics through expert presentations and community discussions.

Located in western Maine, about two-and-a-half hours north of Portland, the town of Rangeley is best known for its pristine natural beauty. Vacationers, adventurers, and outdoor enthusiasts visit this remote area to enjoy its many lakes, acres of forest, miles of trails, unique shops, and welcoming vibe year-round. While these out-of-towners add their own wonderful elements to the community mosaic, the 1,200 permanent residents must actively seek out opportunities to stay connected with the broader world beyond the town’s mountainous borders. As Janet explains, “We are a small town which is far removed from just about everything. We have people here who are very interested in foreign affairs, and they normally have to travel...close to an hour away for this type of programming.” The desire to engage in these enriching activities is there, however; “most just don’t get around to doing that.”

Being aware of this situation among her library’s patrons, Janet decided to bring the outside in through The World In Your Library and its three-event speaking series. Using historical contexts, personal experiences, and more recent developments to better understand current events, attendees grappled with global warming, Chinese intelligence-gathering techniques, and the Korean peninsula.

Over the course of a couple of months, Janet provided her small community with a new means of gaining access to information in a personal and captivating way. The library’s modest front room was filled during all three evening events with individuals eager to absorb each presenter’s enlightening information and stories. People “didn’t come with much [information] about the topic, but left feeling informed” with “more understanding and appreciation of non-public/private international relationships,” new ideas about the “concept of equality,” and a “greater awareness” about the subjects discussed. Participants discovered ways “to make a difference that really counts,” and developed a “need to learn more.” Not only did each talk inform, it also inspired.

The captivated faces and lively discussions colored this small library and its town with new understandings and new connections, resulting in a broader global view with each speaker’s presentation. Janet Wilson’s attempt to bring the outside world closer to home successfully “brought some thought-provoking lectures to a segment of the population which normally doesn’t participate in this type of programming [and to] some of the regulars, too.” Indeed, the world just got a little bit smaller.

Nicole Rancourt is a Program Officer at the Maine Humanities Council.
THE FIRST shots of the Civil War were fired on April 12, 1861. Everyone thought the war would be over in three months. But it didn’t end until April 6, 1865. For four long years, brothers fought brothers; sons, husbands, and brothers went off to fight. Over 750,000 soldiers never returned home. The battles went on, recorded in our history books, creating legends and stories about the men who fought in them.

Stories were also written about life at home and why the war was fought. To this day, Civil War re-enactors recreate battles and events. Books continue to be written as we try to understand what happened. Was it a fight over slavery or state’s rights? Was it purely an economic battle, or was it fought to determine whether the South or the North would control our government? What was happening at home? Why did some men rush to join up while others paid someone to fight in their place?

In 2013, the Maine Humanities Council and the Maine Historical Society gave Mainers the chance to explore these and other questions through several statewide programs. Community teams from Belfast, Gorham, Windham, Presque Isle, and Portland-Westbrook rediscovered local Civil War history in multidisciplinary ways and investigated questions of that era’s motivations, loyalty, identity, and politics at the community level. These teams also researched local Civil War history and, in 2013, digitized collections, created an exhibit on the Maine Historical Society’s online database Maine Memory Network, and hosted a series of “One Story, One Community” book discussions and events.

Look back to April 2013, when this whole project began with Local and Legendary: Maine in the Civil War, a one-day public symposium in Portland. Throughout the day, the lecture hall hummed with conversations about Joshua Chamberlain, the 20th Maine, and local Civil War lore. Approximately 175 students, history buffs, librarians, educators, re-enactors, community team members, and the intellectually curious were present.

Keynote talks by Manisha Sinha (“The Great Event of the Nineteenth Century: Emancipation During the Civil War”) and Patrick Rael (“Maine in the Civil War”) set up the broader context for the war and its outcomes, Maine’s role, and why it still matters. Participants also attended two of four breakout sessions on cultural topics (photography, medicine, theater, and literature) to delve more deeply into the reality of day-to-day life during the war.

Who knew that Uncle Tom’s Cabin was the most popular play in the North and the South during the Civil War period?
Who knew that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was the most popular play in the North and the South during the Civil War period? Or that twice as many men died from disease as from battle wounds? For the first time in America’s history of war, photographs of loved ones could be taken into battle, and conversely the war could be brought home through photographs of early war journalists like Matthew Brady. The 3rd Maine Infantry Fife and Drum Corps energized everyone with a lively performance of field music and then answered questions on the role of music in the Civil War. As one participant put it, “Although as a re-enactor I am familiar with Civil War music, I could not help but be stirred by the 3rd Maine’s program.

The explanation of the tunes and history of the music was great.”

The Maine Humanities Council is proud to co-present this project for Maine residents statewide. In 2014, look for a May symposium with six new communities taking the reins on their local perspective of the Civil War.

Janet Lyons is a long-time Maine Humanities Council facilitator and partner who is organizing the MHC’s half of this project. This project is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.
If you take Interstate 95 as far north as it goes, you're just two hours south of St. Agatha. The town is seated on the shores of Long Lake and about as close to the New Brunswick border as it is to the nearest US town. In the middle of winter there aren't many places to go in town, but there's certainly a warm welcome at the Long Lake Public Library—a regular host of the Maine Humanities Council's *Let's Talk About It* program. *Let's Talk About It* is a free, facilitated book discussion program offered in partnership with libraries all over the state. Groups gather to read a series of books within a specific theme. Scholars facilitate the discussions, taking conversations far beyond the texts themselves. Two residents of St. Agatha, Jackie Ayotte and Sarah Landry, know exactly how much the program has contributed to their community.

Jackie Ayotte and her sister Joan Ayotte are described as the heart and soul of the Long Lake Public Library. Jackie points out that she's not a librarian, but her enthusiasm as the president of the board of directors has carried the library along since its creation in 2007. (The library itself was fashioned from a storeroom in a building with low-income housing.)

When Jackie first discussed *Let's Talk About It* with the Maine Humanities Council, it seemed an overambitious new project. “What happens if we don’t have enough people?” she laughed, remembering. “We needed ten. But we ended up for the first session having twenty people. I had to reorder books because there was such interest in it!”

Twenty is an impressive output from a small community. St. Agatha has decreased in population since Jackie was a child and is currently home to about 800 people. There are mill workers, farmers, retirees, and faculty and staff at the University of Maine at Fort Kent. They and their neighbors make up the colorful mix that attends *Let’s Talk About It*. “This program is drawing a group that you would not normally find together,” Jackie says.

Jackie has seen participants find their voice in the group when they realize that their input is valued. “None of us feel very secure, but with the facilitator we have a person who is into books and not afraid of asking questions. We’ve had very good sharing from people who would not have the confidence to speak up. I always feel differently about the book after people have shared. Because it opens us up. Opens us to new ideas or lived experiences that we would have no way of knowing otherwise.”

The MHC describes *Let’s Talk About It* as providing bricks and mortar for the mind, but participant Sarah Landry would go beyond that. “I think it provides bricks and mortar for the spirit of a community. There is a real deficit in a society that does not provide food and shelter for the human mind and spirit.” Sarah has firsthand experience with the community connections that can develop from a good discussion. She suffers from a health condition that causes her extreme fatigue and pain and drastically limits her mobility. This limitation makes human connection all the more important to her.

“I have taken part in each of the *Let’s Talk About It* series,” Sarah told me.
“Because of my illnesses, I do not get to take part in many community events and am quite isolated. This series is very often the only social event I can attend during a particular month.” Sarah rations her strength for two to three days leading up to a session, and needs two to three days of recovery afterwards. “It may seem like a more logical choice to just stay home,” she said, “and perhaps that is true! But it’s worth it to me.” 

At 34, Sarah, is younger than the average Long Lake Public Library program attendee. She is not deterred by this, but rather appreciates the chance to gain a new perspective. “I get to hear the thoughts of members of my community whom I otherwise would not have access to. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve heard others say, and thought myself, ‘Oh, I hadn’t thought of that in that way!’”

A group discussion of All Quiet on the Western Front stood out as one of Sarah’s most powerful experiences. It was a difficult read for the group given the strong emotions that surround the topic of war. “The book is only the starting point. The discussion turned to our modern day wars and overwhelming issues like veterans with PTSD, explaining war to children, and the politics of war. The group that night was mostly women between the ages of 70 and 80 who have lived through several wars.

“At one point our facilitator asked, ‘Where did you talk about these opinions back then?’ meaning during World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, etc. The women responded, ‘We didn’t talk about this back then. We never had the chance. We were at home trying to make sure our children were fed and clothed, that the farming was done, that the animals were taken care of.’ If ever there was a moment that clearly displayed the need for the Let's Talk About It series, it was this. Here were individuals who had waited fifty or sixty years to have their thoughts and opinions about politics and war heard and taken seriously. This was finally their chance.”

Both Jackie and Sarah have seen their community become more engaged through these discussions over the years. “It makes us look at the broader picture and the reality of life,” Jackie says. The sessions have given a voice and a listening ear to people who may not have experienced either, and have encouraged the sharing of the human experience.

“I get to hear the thoughts of members of my community whom I otherwise would not have access to. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve heard others say, and thought myself, ‘Oh, I hadn’t thought of that in that way!’”  

— Sarah Landry, Let’s Talk About It participant
EXPERIENCE FROM WITHIN:
LITERATURE & MEDICINE
BY KATE WEBBER

One evening a month, a group gathers for three hours to share a potluck dinner and a book discussion. These aren’t teachers, and they’re not meeting at their local library. They’re a group of medical professionals at the Togus Veteran’s Affairs Medical Center who have come to actively improve their professional abilities—not through medical texts, but through literature.

The Togus VA contains a complex of handsome brick buildings suited for a college campus. It is located in Augusta, has a staff of about 1,200, and draws patients from across the state and beyond. Nurse practitioner Denise Dernorsek told me that one of her veterans drives eight hours from Prince Edward Island for his appointments.

For the past 13 years, Togus has been a host of the Maine Humanities Council’s Literature & Medicine: Humanities at the Heart of Health Care. Literature & Medicine brings medical professionals together into discussions of a series of books—including fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. The program is open to anyone in the hospital.

“We have people from across the spectrum within the VA,” explained Dr. Timothy Richardson, Chief of Geriatrics and Extended Care. “Some are Veterans who did not have combat, some are combat Veterans, some like myself are non-Veterans.” Participants of the Literature & Medicine group work with this diverse population, and they themselves are diverse within the administration: they include physicians, nurses, physician assistants, social workers, psychologists, and administrators. “We try not to turn anyone away.”

As well as being Chief of Geriatrics and Extended Care, Tim is a geriatrician at the VA and has been part of Literature & Medicine for 11 years. “It gives you a better sense that we’re all working together for the Veteran,” he said. “I know I came to the VA 27 years ago because I felt that this was a population that I wanted to serve.”

Many of the medical staff members are themselves vets. “There’s a sense of ownership.” Despite the dedication of the staff, both Tim and Denise explained that there are challenges in working with Veterans at the hospital, a patient group that can have significant physical, psychological, and financial needs. Literature & Medicine works because it helps medical professionals better understand some of the forces that have shaped their patients’ mental and physical states. The texts cover a variety of topics, but some of the more relevant
books in the Togus series have taken readers directly into the war experience. Talking about this as a group has allowed participants to relate to their patients and share their own emotional reactions in the context of their everyday work.

Tim summarized the learning experience as the transition from sympathy to empathy. “Physicians say that Literature & Medicine has made them more open to their patient’s problems, and I certainly have felt that myself. It’s one thing to have sympathy, but to be really empathetic you have to have more understanding of what they’re going through. With something like post traumatic stress, there’s sometimes a lot of anger expressed to clinicians. So you take into context what the person has been through and also who they are. If you have a greater understanding of why they are that way, it allows you to be less reactive and improve your ability to care for people.”

“Definitely,” Denise agreed. “To get a look into the minds of the Veterans who were in combat is really valuable because I can relate to these guys in a much better way and be empathetic to their other issues.”

Like anyone with a job that involves emotional strain, those who care for Veterans often experience burnout. “When you get burnout, you don’t have much empathy for people and you don’t care about what other people think,” Tim said. “Just discussing your emotions and how your work is affecting you removes it from you a little so you can start to relate to it.”

Tim described Literature & Medicine discussions as a sort of support network: “It allows for a processing of feelings that you felt you had nowhere to go with. It’s very powerful to hear someone, maybe a social worker, say, ‘I just could feel myself not being able to be present to all the needs that people have.’ You don’t feel so alone in what you’re experiencing.”

Certain books have resonated particularly well with the Togus group, and everyone has their own personal favorite. For Tim, it was Dr. Jonathan Shay’s Achilles in Vietnam. “I have friends who are Veterans,” he said. “I think I understand them better now, and some of their struggles. Professionally it has helped me to understand what our vets went through—just the experience of war, but also a loss of trust in superiors and in people’s integrity.”

Denise remembers Linda Hogan’s People of the Whale, a fictional account of a Native American soldier returning from Vietnam. “It isn’t about Maine, but a lot of the main character’s struggles were applicable to guys who leave from Aroostook County who have never been out of Maine. They come back and they’re expected to blend right back in to the rituals and the social atmosphere they had before, but they’re different. They’re not that person anymore. And the people they come back to don’t understand.”

The experience of Literature & Medicine seems to reinforce the importance of the humanities in areas where it may not have been recognized before. Neither Denise nor Tim had literature as a part of their professional education, but they are glad to see its presence increasing as knowledge spreads and new educational methods are introduced. “It’s becoming more a part of the medical culture,” Denise said. “Looking outside a little bit helps, because you get very focused on what you’re doing. Literature & Medicine helps you to relate not only to the people you care for, but to the larger world.”
T WAS a snowy Monday night, but still a group of readers braved the cold and filtered into a room on the third floor of the Bangor Public Library. They were there for New Books, New Readers, a Maine Humanities Council program for adults who are not in the habit of reading. I was welcomed in as a guest and handed copies of the book; this is one place where everyone is encouraged to join in.

The participants greeted each other like old friends, chose seats in a circle of chairs, and pulled books from bags. One man passed around a photo album from a recent trip to New York City, where he and his coworkers had traveled to be part of the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade. He had been dressed as a clown. He answered the group’s questions about the day, from tossing candy to the difficulty of removing white face paint.

“I wouldn’t have recognized you,” scholar/facilitator Annaliese Jackimides laughed, and effortlessly transitioned the show-and-tell into the evening’s business. “You look different,” she explained. The Bangor group was working through the “Differences” series—a collection of books centered on the theme of what it means to stand apart from others. Like all New Books, New Readers series, there is more to it than meets the eye.

A book group? A club? A scholar-facilitated series designed for a specific audience? New Books, New Readers is all three and more. It’s also a “let’s-talk-about-life-through-books” group, according to Annaliese, and in doing so, it boosts participants’ reading skills as well as their belief in themselves.

Since the early 1990s, New Books, New Readers has been a prominent part of adult education, literacy volunteer, and correctional facility offerings throughout the state. At its core, it’s a book discussion program for adults at low literacy levels, using children’s literature that holds its own during an adult discussion.

Annaliese draws a distinction in the program’s audience: “It’s important to point out that when we say ‘low literacy’ for a group, the mix in the room could include people who haven’t been past the 3rd grade, someone who is seriously intellectually challenged, and someone from Korea who is a chemical engineering PhD candidate at the University of Maine, and their conversational ability in English is restricted.”

The first book on the docket for that snowy night was Charlotte Zolotow’s William’s Doll, the story of a boy who wants nothing more than to have and care for a doll of his own. His brothers mercilessly tease him, and his father wordlessly presents him with a basketball. In the end, his grandmother presents

Annaliese Jackimides and Julia Walkling find joy in expanding literacy across Maine. PHOTO: KATE WEBBER
him with a blue-eyed doll and tells his father that boys ought to have the right to practice being a father to a doll.

Annaliese took the clown costume as an example and used it to help participants relate to William’s feeling of isolation. “We all have things we like to wear, things that make us different.” Everyone in the group had been teased during at least one point in his or her life. Participants talked about gender roles and parental approval. Not everyone understood why a boy would want a doll, even with the grandmother’s justification, but by the end of the discussion the doll itself wasn’t the issue. Through sharing their own experiences and opinions, the group had naturally entered a discussion of human nature—good and ugly.

Participants talked about the toys they had when they were young and what those toys meant to them. The discussion took a turn when one of the participants, a man from Syria, explained that he never had toys. Annaliese made sure this was a learning experience for the group, bringing up the extreme difference of life in a war-torn country. It was a testament to her compassion and sensitivity that the participants opened themselves up to her questions. There was great deal of trust and bravery in that room.

Annaliese has worked with MHC programming for almost a decade. She has facilitated sessions in Waterville High School’s GED program, the Charleston Correctional Facility, the Women’s Reentry Center in Bangor, and the Penobscot County Jail. “I might be doing particular series in different venues simultaneously,” Annaliese said. “But every conversation is totally different because the people in that room shape it. What you bring to it from your past experience is the conversation we have. The series themes are just basic tenets of how we live.”

For most participants, New Books, New Readers is not just about mastering words. “There are people who have been through series after series after series, and for a while they don’t say much,” Annaliese said. “But if you allow them that, next thing you know you have this active participant, someone who has opinions and will voice them. And they’ll say that they never used to do that because they felt the questions they asked would be stupid and they would be seen as stupid. It takes them a while to realize that’s not going to happen here. We have people who say that it’s the first time they’ve felt respected in a conversation.”

In Bangor that night, I had the chance to see just how much these conversations can contain. The books they read were 15 pages, each with a sentence or two and an illustration. When I stopped to consider what it meant for everyone in that room to simply be sitting there, holding a book, and sharing their opinions, I felt the impact even more.

Thanks to New Books, New Readers programming across the state, many Mainers are getting this chance to change their lives, one sentence or even one word at a time.

Program Director Julia Walkling expanded on this: “In a way, you might say that a book is a mirror in which we see our lives. And I think that’s really how it works. For our participants who are not used to reading, books haven’t had a place in their lives. It makes them suddenly realize what a book can do—that it can reflect their lives, help them think about their lives. And it makes them then want to read, because they see the point of it.”

Over the years, both Annaliese and Julia have seen the tremendous impact that New Books, New Readers has had. For someone who can’t read, to simply show up and accept a book is an enormous step. Annaliese, like the program’s other facilitators, takes great care to help participants feel comfortable in the discussion setting, one that they’re typically not used to. For some participants, this takes more than one series.

“But every conversation is totally different because the people in that room shape it. What you bring to it from your past experience is the conversation we have.” – Annaliese Jackimides, scholar/facilitator
**Letters about Literature**

**Letters about Literature** is a national reading and writing promotion program for young readers. Every year, the contest invites students to craft a letter to an author, contemporary or past, whose work has made a significant impact on their lives. Generous support from the David Royte Fund (Royte is pictured at left) enables the Maine Humanities Council to offer this opportunity to 4th–12th grade students throughout the state.

Submissions in 2013/2014 addressed a wide range of authors, varied greatly in tone, and interpreted the assignment in numerous ways. Each entry also had something important to say about how a particular book made the reader feel less alone, inspired the student to act differently, or taught the student something about him- or herself.

Enjoy the following excerpts from our winning letters.

**Level I  First-Place Winner (Grades 4–6)**

Excerpt: Lauren Paradise [Grade 6, Lyman Moore Middle School, Portland] writing to J. K. Rowling, *The Casual Vacancy*

I have a friend who is very smart but has a challenge, so people don’t understand him, or even give him a chance. He has a lot of knowledge and talks a lot, a trait that many of my peers find annoying and tiresome. I thought that I should get to know him, give him the chance that no one else had given him. He is now the smartest friend I know, and also really nice. He has a lot to offer, and I would compare him to Sukhvinder. Like Sukhvinder, he is often mistreated, made fun of, and doesn’t have a lot of friends. Neither have the ability to stand up for themselves, but they shouldn’t have to. It should be a loving world where everyone is empathetic to one another.

**Level II  First-Place Winner (Grades 7–8)**

Excerpt: Emma Sophia Forthofer [Grade 8, Pemetic Elementary School, Southwest Harbor] writing to Stephen Chbosky, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*

And the way Charlie behaves has definitely translated into my life. His thoughtfulness and sincerity has inspired me to be more open in my friendships and interactions with the people all around me. I listen more and talk less. I try to hear what others have to say and then decide for myself what to think. I keep harsh words to myself while still expressing what I’m really thinking and feeling. And I’m certainly “participating” more in school events and things along those lines. Charlie has taught me how to become a little less introverted and a little more social. He’s taught me how to be myself and to make the best of what I have.

**Level III  First-Place Winner (Grades 9–12)**

Excerpt: Maura Perry [Grade 10, Greely High School, Cumberland] to Stephen Chbosky, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*

High school has been hard. At times I felt like I didn’t have many friends. I felt left out and uncomfortable with myself. I wasn’t completely happy. I was only happy at home, and I dreaded school and the people in it. In my eyes I saw some people who everyone seemed to like. As a person trying to finish my “jigsaw puzzle,” I tried to place my pieces to form a “perfect” puzzle, one to match the “girl-who-everyone-likes” puzzle. After reading your book, it changed my perspective on everything. Your book captures the life of Charlie who, in many ways, is like me and many other teenagers going through their own “tough” time. Your book taught me that I should find my pieces and not worry if they’re like other kids. I realized I needed to find friends who accepted me like Charlie’s friends did. I started acting like myself and not pretending to be someone else, and I tried to find friends who liked me, the real me.
Walking through the lobby of the Salt Institute for Documentary Studies, Katie Rutherford was a contrast to the powerful images she had compiled for “The Lonely Fight: A History of AIDS in Maine.” Her compassion and enthusiasm were apparent as she described the decades of this disease in Maine and the stories of those who have been caught up by it.

Katie is the Director of Development at the Frannie Peabody Center, Maine’s largest HIV/AIDS service organization. She was the driving force behind “The Lonely Fight,” an exhibit that would serve as the organization’s annual World AIDS Day event as well as a new opportunity to raise awareness of the disease and its continued impact in Maine communities. It also highlighted the contribution of her organization’s founder, Frannie Peabody, an “unlikely hero in the fight against AIDS.”

Frannie, who joined the movement in her 80s after her grandson’s death from AIDS, was a powerful voice demanding compassion and care for AIDS victims.

Katie researched the project using the archives of the Frannie Peabody Center and USM’s LGBT Special Collections, and interviewed family members of some of those first diagnosed in Maine. She found no shortage of stories to tell.

The exhibit appeared as a timeline of approximately fifteen “events” spanning from 1981 to the present day, as well as two heartbreaking memorial quilts from the Names Project (each panel of the quilts tells the story of someone who died from AIDS). “Events” include photographs, quotes, and article clippings detailing the story of an individual or a significant event in the history of AIDS in Maine.

The first panel, from 1981, hits hard with the scarred and suffering face of Maine’s first diagnosed AIDS case. One shot reveals the man smiling with friends and then the last photo, taken before his death. The next panel tells the story of Vincent Boulanger, a Portland Museum of Art employee who was diagnosed in his twenties. Vincent became an activist for AIDS, even traveling as far as Norway to speak. At the time, he was the longest-lived AIDS survivor—a mere seven years.

“Family members that I spoke with said a lot about stigma and how in the beginning they had to hide away from the community,” Katie said. “There were stories of people being beat up—sometimes with the added complications of not having the right medication. So they were dealing with a really painful disease and being rejected by a community. And that’s not specific to Maine; that’s just how the world reacted.”

Katie has watched people’s faces as they viewed the exhibit and has seen both tears and smiles. “It’s been bittersweet. Of course I want it to have an emotional impact—it’s very painful at times, especially for ones that lived through it and their family members. But to be able to honor those that we’ve lost—I think it’s one of those things that makes people happy in a way. To be able to take that time and reflect and remember the good things about the people that they have lost.”

Over the course of a week, “The Lonely Fight” touched both those who have felt the effects of HIV/AIDS in their own lives and those who had never heard of Frannie Peabody. Over one hundred people came to the opening event on World AIDS Day, and more filtered in during the week. On the concluding night, which coincided with Portland’s October First Friday Art Walk, over 300 people visited the exhibit.

Working from the bleak beginning of the exhibit timeline to the optimistic, colorful photographs at the end gives a strong sense of the great progress that has been made over the years. But there’s still so much to be done, Katie said. “Today we’re still dealing with stigma around HIV and AIDS. A lot of our clients don’t want to be seen by the rest of the world as an HIV positive person. That’s why we have a World AIDS Day; the world takes a day to reflect on what has happened and the advances we’ve made. But I think we still really have a long way to go.”
High school students learned about 18th-century life on the Maine frontier and also about the writing of history through an exercise in transcribing an original account book. In addition, they took part in archaeological excavations at the site of Fort Richmond, where the account book was actually written.

> Maine Historic Preservation Commission

MAAE sent a professional choreographer into a sophomore English class at Bangor High School to help students create a dance based on their reading of *Of Mice and Men*. This two-week residency, part of a program involving a total of four classes from Bangor High School and Brewer High School, culminated in a performance by participating classes at a conference, to which the public was invited.

> Maine Alliance for Arts & Education

Norway Memorial Library was awarded the book and film series *Bridging Cultures Bookshelf: Muslim Journeys* by the American Library Association and the National Endowment for the Humanities. The MHC’s grant funded the library’s use of those materials in a program series highlighting Muslim culture. Activities began on June 20th with a kickoff program about Muslim culture, continued with a three-part book discussion series including a movie night, and ended on August 22nd with a performance of Middle Eastern music.

> Friends of the Norway Memorial Library

The Central Kennebec Heritage Council’s *Central Maine Plays* introduced the community and tourists to inland Maine’s recreational and leisure activities that were popular in the past. A collaboration of museums and historical societies from the area used their collections and programs to provide educational activities and exhibits that explored the lighter side of life.

> Fairfield Historical Society

*The Thinking Heart*, based on the journal and letters written by Dutch Holocaust victim Etty Hillesum about the German occupation of Amsterdam during WWII, is a performance of poems read by two alternating speakers, accompanied by cello. This grant funded a performance at the Schaeffer Theatre on the Bates College campus.

> Bates College

In the Blood was a live multimedia documentary film illustrating the life and culture of the 19th-century Maine lumberman. This grant helped fund its presentation at several regional high schools.

> Mahoosuc Arts Council

The Central Maine Plays introduced the community and tourists to inland Maine’s recreational and leisure activities that were popular in the past. A collaboration of museums and historical societies from the area used their collections and programs to provide educational activities and exhibits that explored the lighter side of life.
$1,000 | The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace
Portland Ballet Company & the Choral Art Society presented The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace, featuring singers, orchestra, and dancers performing world-premiere choreography. The show included dramatic readings by survivors of war and conflict and a preview show for students with a pre-performance educational guide, as well as a moderated post-show discussion.
> Portland Ballet Company

$6,000 | I’m Your Neighbor Portland
I’m Your Neighbor Portland distributed, discussed, and celebrated nine children’s and adult books set in Maine’s recent refugee and immigrant communities. It facilitated a city-wide exchange of stories and discussion around the universal themes of Journeys, Home, Tradition, and Neighbors.
> Portland Public Library

$7,500 | Winslow Homer’s Civil War
In conjunction with the Maine Civil War Trail Project, the Portland Museum of Art presented the special exhibition Winslow Homer’s Civil War and related educational programming. Through a selection of rarely on-view prints and an 1860s oil painting drawn from the museum’s permanent collection, this exhibition examined Winslow Homer’s perceptive observations on the nature of modern warfare and the impact of the sectional conflict on American society.
> Portland Museum of Art

$800 | Visiting Author Series
As part of its annual writer series and Common Read program, Northern Maine Community College brought writer Monica Wood for a presentation, reading, and book signing in the Edmunds Library (open to the general public), based on her book When We Were the Kennedys. She also visited an Advanced Composition class at the College.
> Northern Maine Community College

$960 | World Class Kids
This project’s goal was to expand the understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity and human resilience, while acknowledging and celebrating how all residents incarcerated at the Long Creek Development Center are overcoming adversity. The project centered on learning and celebrating various cultures, traditions, and common bonds.
> Long Creek Youth Development Center

$5,250 | Winter Harbor Historic Photo Project with Penobscot Marine Museum
Schoodic Arts for All offered programming around 45 historical photographs made from glass negatives of the Eastern Illustrated Publishing Company in the collections of the Penobscot Marine Museum. Images included historic photographs of details of daily life dating from the early 1900s.
> Schoodic Arts for All

$1,000 | Understanding Change in the South Berwick Area of the Piscataqua Region
This project helped students look back at 200 years of history in the South Berwick area of the Piscataqua region. It celebrated the stories of local people interacting with an environment that has always been part land, part water. It showed students how we tell our history and how see ourselves in a continuum with the past. It also allowed them to establish a connectedness to place, as well as envision the Piscataqua’s future.
> York Middle School
IN MEMORIAM:
EILEEN CURRAN
(1927 – 2013)

BY DIANE MAGRAS,
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT


Each July, Eileen Curran’s Waterville garden was in full bloom: pink lupine, white scabiosa, and golden gloriosa daisies. Other perennials wove between these plants, creating a 19th-century tapestry of color and texture, like the gardens that had created the concept of English Cottage gardening. It made perfect sense that such a garden would surround the home of Victorianist and Colby College Professor Emerita Eileen Curran.

Victoriana was rife in Eileen’s garden and within her home, where she had illustrations from *Punch* and William Morris “Willow” patterned curtains and wallpaper direct from the UK. Her 19th-century books—shelves upon shelves of old editions of Dickens, Trollope, Thackeray, Coleridge—surrounded a high-backed chair, an ancient wooden desk, and a new computer.

Eileen was like the Victorians she researched: while honoring the past, she embraced new technology, to the point of exclusively publishing her work online in *The Curran Index of Additions to and Corrections of the Wellesley Index of Victorian Periodicals. Biographies of Some Obscure Contributors to 19th-century Periodicals*, published on the Victoria Research Web, expanded the *Curran Index’s* content. These resources delved into the prolific world of Victorian men and women who published their articles, stories, poems, and essays anonymously, but whose identities help researchers today weave together the booming industry of letters. (Dickens’s famous *Household Words* was only a small part of the picture.)

These “little” people—writers who never published more than a few articles, those who were never sufficiently established, or those whose anonymous paths petered out in old parish registries—were Eileen’s delight. She believed in the important contribution that anonymous writers made, just as she believed in the intellectual worth of all people, including the many who are outside the public spotlight here in Maine. Her favorite program among the MHC’s offerings was *Let’s Talk About It* for the discussions it prompted in rural libraries. In fact, she had made her first gift when she learned about a series in Charleston—she loved the idea of people in a familiar small town discussing powerful literature.

On April 22, 2013, Eileen Curran, who had suffered poor health earlier in the year, died at the age of 85. She left behind many friends among the Victorian research community, the Council family, and in her hometown of Waterville, not to mention the Colby students who remember falling in love with Victorian literature and history thanks to her. In 2013, Colby College adopted her papers and her unfinished research projects to form a special collection to which researchers in Victorian periodicals will have access.

This summer, the Council learned of a generous bequest that Eileen had left to our work. Like the great Victorian philanthropists who introduced new
models of education and medicine, Eileen’s support and intellectual work will make a tremendous difference for many in her beloved Maine.

“A few years ago, doing some research into the history of that monumental achievement, the Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, I stumbled upon a December 1958 letter from the Index’s guiding genius, Walter Houghton, to fellow Victorianist Richard Altick. Houghton had written excitedly of a newly discovered ally for his fledgling project:

I’ve found a demon at Colby who eats, sleeps, talks, dreams nothing but contributors to Victorian journals, and already, aged 30, has a tremendous knowledge of British archives.

Name: Eileen Curran.

Eileen was touched when I showed her this passage. She vividly remembered Houghton’s offer, a few weeks after he had written this letter, of an editorial position with the new project. She also remembered her own sense of discovery: Curran, it turns out, had been as glad to find Houghton as Houghton had been to find Curran. Recently hired by Colby College in Maine, she was on the lookout [in New England] for someone who shared the passionate interest in Victorian periodicals that she had cultivated…”

—Patrick Leary, President, Research Society for Victorian Periodicals [from Victorian Periodicals Review, Summer, 2013]

The Eileen M. Curran Papers, housed in Colby College Special Collections, was established in the spring of 2013 to celebrate the scholarly career and contributions to the Victorian Studies community accomplished by Eileen Curran, Colby Professor Emerita (English).

The collection contains Curran’s working files and notes (with original order preserved), Cornell University dissertation materials, photographic materials and albums, personal documents and artifacts, and published reference works. These materials complement related items in Special Collections consulted regularly by Curran after her retirement from the Colby faculty. The collection is intended as a significant resource for future Victorian Studies scholars to continue Curran’s research and expand the Curran Index.

In establishing the Curran Papers at Colby, Special Collections gratefully acknowledges the extensive assistance and guidance provided by Patrick Leary, Curran’s long-time colleague and founder of the Victoria Research Web and VICTORIA online discussion list.
Maine Humanities Council 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; go to www.mainehumanities.org; or contact Diane Magras, Director of Development, at 207-773-5051 or diane@mainehumanities.org.

We are proud to devote the space in this report to thank all of our donors at all levels of giving. Whether your gift was $10 or $10,000, you’ve helped us to make a difference in Maine.

The list that follows represents gifts received in the 2013 Fiscal Year (11.1.12 – 10.31.13).
HUMANITIES TOMORROW SOCIETY
The Estate of Eileen M. Curran
The Estate of Ross D. Sinclair

ANNUAL FUND
The Maine Humanities Council is grateful for its unrestricted Annual Fund support. These gifts, quite simply, make our programming possible, allowing us to maintain a statewide mission and serve every corner of Maine.

MHC Circle ($1,000+)
Peter J. Aicher
Charlton & Noni Ames
Hayden & Meredith Anderson
Richard E. Barnes
Carol M. Beaulmer
Patricia Bixel
Eliot R. Cutler & Melanie Stewart Cutler
Judith Daniels
Diversified Communications, as recommended by Josephine H. Detmer
Barbara Goodbody
Martha S. Henry
Merton G. Henry
Ann Kibbe & Kevin Wertheim
Lincoln & Gloria Ladd
Kenneth Spier & Joan Leitzer
Jonathan Lee
Thomas & Leslie Lizotte
Merle Nelson**
Sally & Ted Oldham
John R. Opperman
Alfred & Dorothy Suzi Osher
Memorial Foundation
Harriet & Steven Passerman
Paul Royte**
Anne Russell
Dorothy & Elliott Schwartz
George L. Shinn and Clara S. Shinn Fund of the Maine Community Foundation
Jody & Steven Thaxton
Ann Staples Waldron
Maryanne & John Ward
Peter & Margaret Webster
Pie & Judy Wick*
Carol Wishcamper
Douglas E. Woodbury & Judith A. Fletcher
Woodbury
Mr. & Mrs. Daniel A. Zilkha*

*New Books, New Readers
**David Royte Fund

Humanities Benefactor ($500 - $999)
Einar & Betsy Andersen
William Case, III
Douglas Chamberlain
Paul Dion
Michelle Giard Draeger
Roger & Betty Gilmore
Laura & Douglas Henry
Mary Lee Rushmore
Bob & Judy Tredwell
Alice N. Weltman
Anne Broderick Zill

Humanities Companion ($250 - $499)
Martha Barkley
Susan & James Carter
Douglas Chamberlain
Elizabeth Davidson
Lois MacKinnon Davis
Phillips-Green Foundation at the recommendation of Douglas Green
Alison & Horace Hildreth
The Helaine and Brock Hornby Fund
Theodora J. Kalkow
Sheldon & Audrey Katz
William T. and Elizabeth L. Knowles Fund of the Maine Community Foundation
Audrey Maynard
Stephen J. Podgajny & Laura Bean
John Ryan & Jenny Scheu
Ken & Mary Pat Templeton
Suzanne Trazoff
Anne P. Woodbury

Humanities Partner ($100 - $249)
Anonymous (3)
Susan Abt
Ann Marie Almeida
Elaine Ford & Arthur Boatin
Kathleen Ashley
Sally & Ron Bancroft
Danuta M. Barnard
Paul & Cathleen Bauschatz
Edmund & Ruth Benedikt
Victoria & Erno Bonebakker
Jane & Frank Bragg
Gayle Brazeau
Rick & Anne Brown
Marjorie & John Burns
Susan & Franklin Burroughs
Joan Busiere
Carley Anne Byars
Janet & Thomas Carper
Sue Carrington
Donna Cassidy & Michael Lawson
Thomas & Katherine Chappell
Mary C. Calbath
Anthony Corrado
Allan & Linda Currie
Judi & Jim Cimbal
Sally J. Daggett
Elizabeth L. Davis
Diana Dionne-Morang
George K. Dreher
Holly Dick & Christopher Dumaine
Susan Emmet
Peter M. Enggass
John D. Fay
George & Patricia Fowler
Ed Friedman
Phil Steele & Francesca Gallucio-Steele
Noel Genova
Rasalee & Christopher Glass
Frank Glazer
Emery Goff
Susan & Jerry Goldberg
Carolyn E.H. Gontaski
Daniel P. Gunn
Judith Hakola
Kathleen C. Hardwick
Janet Henry
& Vernon Moore
George & Cheryl Higgins
Stanley R. Howe
Sam Hull
Kathryn Hunt
Mary Hunter
& James Parakilas
Carolyn Jenkins
Beryl Ann Johnson
David R. Jones & Angela J. Connelly
Erik C. Jorgensen & Tamara M. Raser
Dr. Carol F. Kesler
William T. and Elizabeth L.
Knowles Fund of the Maine Community Foundation
Diana Krauss & Jere LaPointe
Karen Stathopolos & Kim Krauss
Neil Lamb
Bill Laney
Ms. Larrea
Dale & Rich Lewis
Nancy M. MacKnight
Nancy N. Masterton
Robert E. McAlee, MD
James McKenna & Jane Orbeton
Sarah F. McMahon
Wesley & Diane McNair

FY’13 New Books, New Readers partnered with adult education and literacy volunteers in 15 Maine communities, holding 130 sessions and 25 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.

FY’13 Over 1,000 students from across Maine entered Letters About Literature in 2013; 49—from 19 communities—made it to the final round.

FY’13 Literature & Medicine: Humanities at the Heart of Health Care® reached 10 Maine medical facilities and 17 more nationwide.
FY’13 Let’s Talk About It and World In Your Library partnered with 30 libraries across Maine, holding scholar-facilitated reading and discussion programs and foreign policy speaker series for nearly 450 community members.

FY’13 The MHC awarded $108,943 through 64 grants to Maine nonprofits, reaching 36 different towns and approximately 94,750 people.
During Fiscal Year 2013, the Maine Humanities Council had operating income of $1,462,670 and operating expenses of $1,313,132. 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 Library of Congress, 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 $149,370.

IN-KIND DONORS
The following organizations and people have generously donated time, support, and services beyond the call of ordinary programming:

Harley Design
Moore & Moore Enterprises
MHC scholars and partners throughout Maine

The Maine Humanities Council is the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.
Will it be 19th century? An ancient book? The first piece of fiction ever to be written in Japan? Or Milton?

Over the past 16 years, Winter Weekend participants have anxiously waited to hear the next year’s book selection for this classic event from the Maine Humanities Council. With top scholars (Caroline Alexander, *The War That Killed Achilles: The True Story of Homer’s Iliad and the Trojan War*, for *The Aeneid*), a themed meal linked to the book (think madeleines and roast rabbit for *Swann’s Way*), and the chance to discuss literature with like-minded people from across the state, New England, and even a few across the country, Winter Weekend holds a dear place in its participants’ hearts. It’s no wonder that this March event has its devoted regulars, and, unfortunately, a common consequence of popularity: the annual waiting list, which traditionally starts in late autumn, even with our new audience limit of 200.

The intention of Winter Weekend’s book choice has been to share a text that participants may or may not have read but often think that they *should* have read or want to read again with scholars’ guidance. Lecture topics range from cultural and social histories, literary analysis, the effects of translation, the period seen through its costume and textiles, and depictions in music or film. The best books to support these wide-ranging themes are often traditional classics; it’s fascinating to see a familiar book with a completely different lens, lending to new depths and often the inspiration to read it again right after the event. But there’s always room for something new.

In 2013, the Maine Humanities Council itself tried something new. Ever since the start of Winter Weekend in 1998, MHC staff chose the event’s text based on author birth or death anniversaries, new translations, audience recommendations, and scholar contacts. While no one seemed disappointed with the choices (if the waiting lists are any indication), the MHC decided to give audience the final decision. At Winter Weekend 2013, each audience member filled out a ballot, ranking a selection of books chosen by staff to represent audience recommendations and a few unusual staff picks. In this way, the audience picked Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* as the text for 2014. By the time this publication is in print, the same process will have resulted in the 2015 book choice (find out which one of the above-pictured texts it is at www.mainehumanities.org). Excitement is in the air!