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Open Access to Expertise with Humanities Washington's Speakers Bureau

Asia Lara
Humanities Washington, asia@humanities.org

Stone Addington
Humanities Washington, stone@humanities.org

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Asia Lara & Stone Addington

Humanities Washington

March 25th, 2022

What is Humanities Washington?

- Established in 1973

- The Washington State affiliate for the National Endowment for the Humanities

- Our mission: We aim to open minds and bridge divides by creating spaces to explore different perspectives

Programs

1. Prime Time Family Reading
2. Speakers Bureau
3. Think & Drink
4. Washington State Poet Laureate
5. Center for Washington Cultural Traditions
6. Grants
7. Public Humanities Fellows

Let's Talk Access

Alongside the proliferation of available information are a few epistemic pitfalls:

- Motivated reasoning / bias
- Widespread distribution of
  - Conspiracy theories
  - Pseudoscience
  - Misinformation and propaganda
- Lone wolves with a "degree from Google University"
- Communities that function as echo chambers and engines of error

Types of Access

Mere Access:

- Information is available; no walls stand in one's way
- Increased danger of epistemic pitfalls

Robust Access:

- Information is available
- One has the guidance to contextualize, understand, and reflect on the information

For robust access, a guide with content expertise **and** pedagogical expertise is needed

Robust Access

- Access to experts provide a way around and out of epistemic pitfalls.
    - Experts with content and pedagogical expertise help to undermine the "degree from Google University," pop epistemic bubbles, and interrupt echo chambers.

- It is easy to argue online. It is difficult to argue with an expert.

- A teacher/guide takes the individual's flourishing seriously; raw information and online arguments do not.

Robust Access

Content Expertise:

- Depth of knowledge

- Breadth of knowledge

- Comfort with dialectic

Pedagogical Expertise:

- Translation

- Facilitation

- Engagement

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Speakers Bureau and Robust Access

- Humanities Washington's Speakers Bureau aims to provide robust access with over 30 experts on topics ranging from the history of hip-hop in the PNW to contextualizing rage in American politics.

- Speakers are readily available to travel across the state or for online events.

- Presentations are offered at little to no cost for qualifying not-for-profit organizations.

Speakers Bureau and Robust Access

Content Expertise:

- Depth of knowledge
- Breadth of knowledge
- Comfort with dialectic

Pedagogical Expertise:

- Teaching vs. Persuading
- Translation
- Facilitation

Speakers are specifically evaluated for these qualities via:

- A detailed written application
- A rigorous audition and revision process
- A three-part evaluation after each event (speaker, audience, and host)
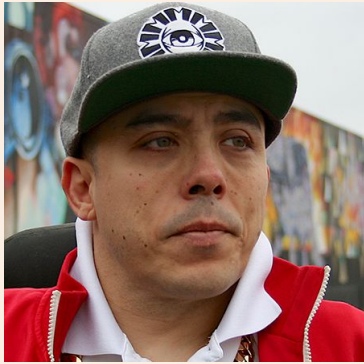
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What is Speakers Bureau?

- Our longest-running and most popular program
- Provides free public humanities presentations statewide, with an emphasis on serving rural and underrepresented areas
- Comprised of a roster of 30+ unique and relevant talks that rotates on a biannual basis
- Last year, over 200 Speakers Bureau events took place in every congressional district, with over 7,000 total attendees!

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Program Goals

- Present context so that folks can make informed decisions on challenges facing our communities

- Increase opportunities for audiences to connect with experts and others with varied points of view

- Grow and diversify audiences of hosting organizations

- Increase collaboration between community organizations

Examples of Current Talks

King Khazm

Hip-Hop & It Don't Stop

Deepti Agrawal

The Ancient Art of Madhubani Painting

Chelsey Richardson

Writing as Self-Love

William Woodward

Will the 2020s Roar like the 1920s?

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How Do I Host a Talk?

Step 1: Select the talk(s) you're interested in and review our host guidelines via our website.

Step 2: Send your request to [speakers@humanities.org.](mailto:speakers@humanities.org)

Step 3: Schedule with the speaker.

Step 4: Submit your application!

Host Guidelines

Host responsibilities include:

- Organizing the event
- Assisting the speaker day of
- Disperse our survey to attendees for feedback
- Submit a short evaluation following the event

Note: Specific guidelines vary depending on whether the event is online or in-person. Resources are available for both formats.

Funding

- Fees per event: $300 honorarium; any travel costs for in-person events

- Any Washington State not-for-profit organization may be eligible to receive funding for these costs.
  - Libraries are some of our most popular hosts (and certainly qualify for funding!)

Speakers Bureau In Action

"Searching for and vetting speakers is time-consuming and challenging for staff to do with existing resources. Humanities Washington's Speakers Bureau provides access to a variety of high-quality speakers on a wide range of topics...The Speakers Bureau program made it simple and straightforward to connect with an expert and skilled speaker on a high-priority topic for my organization."

KCLS Foundation, 7/28/21

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Thank You!

Asia Lara, Program Manager, asia@humanities.org

Stone Addington, Director of Programs, stone@humanities.org

Questions?

Pain points? Your needs? Your Programming?