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Toward the Practice of the Humanities

Sylvia Gale and Evan Carton

One consolation for humanists about the contemporary crisis of the humanities in America is that it is centuries old. "Perhaps the time is already come," Emerson encouraged the members of the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard in 1837, "when the sluggard intellect of this continent will look from under its iron lids, and fill the postponed expectation of the world with something better than the exertions of mechanical skill." "By the time a man was old enough to have a son in college," Woodrow Wilson admonished the delegates to the 1910 convention of the Association of American Universities, in a speech entitled The Importance of the Arts Course as Distinct from the Professional and Semi-professional Courses, "he had become so immersed in some one special interest that he no longer comprehended the country and age in which he was living." "Few observers of higher education would deny," Duke University vice-provost for interdisciplinary studies Cathy Davidson and University of California Humanities Research Institute director David Theo Goldberg declared in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* in 2004, "that support for the humanities is declining in an environment in which universities are increasingly ordered according to the material interests, conditions, and designs of the sciences, technology, and the professions."

While we praise (and generally share) the cultural commitments that underlie Emerson's, Wilson's, and Davidson and Goldberg's briefs for the humanities, we think that the time has come to bury their rhetoric. We do not pretend to have discovered exactly how to lay traditional descriptions and defenses of the humanities to rest, let alone to have devised an entirely adequate alternative promotional discourse for what we do and value. But we believe that such formulations as the ones we have quoted are flawed and self-defeating, at once hobbled from effectively performing the public advocacy they intend and ill-suited to represent the sort of humanities work that takes place not only within but beyond and, increasingly, across the walls of contemporary American universities.

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The appeals of Emerson, Wilson, and Davidson and Goldberg, though composed in different centuries, are all predicated upon an assumed divide between instrumental and humanistic endeavors, and between non-academic and academic environments and communities. Under this standard, the humanities enters the contest for popular interest and support by representing itself as a restricted domain and conceding the field of direct and productive activity to its adversary. What Davidson and Goldberg call "the province of the humanities" is thus doomed to seem both provincial — marginal, ancillary — and rarefied. And it is so doomed whether that province is imagined (or governed) conservatively or radically, as a space of cultivation or a space of critique. By the characteristic implication of its spokespersons, the humanities — as Auden remarked of poetry and Fish said of theory — makes nothing happen.

This is the unfortunate implication of Davidson and Goldberg's rhetoric, from their essay's title on. "A Manifesto for the Humanities in a Technological Age" disclaims not only the age but also practical skill and constructiveness (*technē*), leaving the humanities unmanifest and abstractly, sometimes abjectly, propositional: "We have much to offer, and we need to be assertive in defining our contribution, labeling it, and getting our message heard." The authors proceed to offer "seven characterizations of the humanities," each of which they identify by an epigrammatic label: "History matters"; "Relationality reveals"; "Conscience and critical memory trouble"; "Creativity counts"; "Social policy contains social assumptions and values"; "Communication clarifies"; "Diversity is important"; and "Linguistic diversity is essential to real heterogeneity." Again, we should stress that we assent to these propositions and agree that they adumbrate some of the work and worth of the humanities. Yet it is noteworthy and problematic, we think, that in all but one of Davidson and Goldberg's characterizations, the subject is unincarnate and the verb is intransitive.

The exception, proposition five, is the one case in which the humanities are aligned with the objects ("social assumptions and values") that the substantive subject ("policy") contains and conceals. Davidson and Goldberg gloss this proposition as follows: "The humanities, social in character even if all too readily hermetic in practice, can help delineate the assumptions and values in social arrangements." To the extent that the humanities of Davidson and Goldberg's manifesto functions in the world, it functions to anchor and orient activities performed by non-humanistic actors. Hence: "A world without the humanities would be one in which science and technology knew no point of social reference, had

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lost their cultural compass and moral scope." In this vision, policy, science, and technology are the agents of "social arrangements." The humanities, though social in aspiration, is confined to the province of values or to the regulatory role of reference point, compass.

Persuasive effectiveness and descriptive accuracy, we propose, both require that humanists represent the humanities differently, as a non-exclusive site and a practical instrument of social production. The humanities must be recast and re-articulated *as* a social practice, a practice not confined to interrogating social arrangements but involved in *making* them. Such efforts are already underway in organizations and projects operating "at the intersection of higher education and community life," to quote a positioning statement of one such organization, the national consortium of academic and cultural institutions and public program administrators, *Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life*. The short history of our own organization, the University of Texas Humanities Institute, also exemplifies the shift in vision and practice that we advocate — a shift, it is important to add, that we did not simply dream up one day in our office but that emerged from the mix of our programs and the mixings of our constituencies in ways we did not entirely plan or anticipate, and that changed and clarified our institute's identity and our understanding of our role as humanists.

The remainder of this essay attempts to chart that shift, not as an achieved outcome but as an ongoing process. In describing some of the initiatives we have undertaken, and reflecting on some of the challenges we confront, we hope to contribute to what we see as a nascent movement, in which our institute is one of many participants and stakeholders. University-based humanities centers and institutes, we think, have an especially critical role and stake in this movement to conceive and enact a more dynamic and inclusive social practice and a more effective public rhetoric for the humanities. Our example and that of others suggests that academic humanists are already learning to walk a new walk. What we have yet to figure out — ironically, given our customary identification and self-regard as stewards of language, and the persistent sub-audible hum of the old saw about them that can do and them that can't teach — is how to talk it.

When the UT Humanities Institute was founded in 2001, its rhetoric, tinged by its Lone Star locale, was self-consciously exceptionalist: "Humanities Institutes at other universities are centers for interdisciplinary academic research and community. They provide time and space for resident and visiting faculty, scholars representing a wide range of fields, to rub shoulders and minds as they pursue self-directed projects and explore topics of common interest. Our ambition is bolder." What we then flagged as bold was our intention to complement the traditional work of a university-housed humanities center by actively fostering public access to and involvement in humanistic inquiry — a goal we described as that of promoting an "interactive and broadly participatory public intellectual sphere."

Such an ambition was by no means universal among entities like ours, but neither was it unique. Indeed, its articulation placed us among a sizeable group of humanities centers and institutes whose identity rhetoric included a commitment to serve off-campus communities, on top of the pledge to accommodate and advance interdisciplinary scholarship. This commitment was and is most commonly asserted by humanities centers at large public universities, whose host institutions — motivated less by public disinvestment in the humanities than by legislative underinvestment in higher education — have begun to emphasize civic engagement and enhanced university-community relations as a socially responsive and value-rich development strategy.

Accordingly, nearly two-thirds of the approximately thirty-five Research One university humanities institutes belonging to the Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes (CHCI) incorporate public access and involvement language into their mission statements, usually at the end of a tiered list of commitments. The Humanities Institute at a large northeastern university, for example, enumerates its "three main missions" as follows: "to stimulate new modes of interdisciplinary research within the humanities and social sciences; to build bridges between the human sciences and the medical, technical, and natural sciences; and to reach out to the local community through public lectures and film series." Even as it embraces "the local community" among the Institute's constituencies, this fairly typical formulation suggests the subordination and minimal integration of that community, and the programs pertaining to it, in the larger scheme and vision of the Institute's work. Missions one and two stimulate new modes of research and build bridges; mission three, by comparison, is more gestural (reaching out) than purposive, and promises not the collaborative production of knowledge but its packaged presentation.

In a few cases, our peer organizations have developed more resonant and reflective ways to convey their interest in creating spheres of contact between on and off-campus constituencies. These humanities centers and institutes tend to emphasize their role as facilitators, even *provacateurs*, of exchange and debate between scholars and citizens. Thus, the Simpson Center for the Humanities at the University of Washington announces itself as "dedicated to fostering innovative crossdisciplinary research and teaching in the humanities and to stimulating exchange and debate on cultural and intellectual issues among University of Washington scholars and the citizens of the greater Seattle community." The off-campus community still enters the picture after "research and teaching," but it does so as a participant in "exchange and debate," on an equal footing with members of the university community. That equality is strongly implied as well

in the succinct mission statement of the Penn Humanities Forum: "To use humanistic knowledge and expertise to promote an ongoing cultural conversation involving the range of university disciplines and the general public."

We consider these organizations to be leading sites of the kind of re-casting and re-articulation of the humanities that we advocate. In representing local community members as active partners in their intellectual and cultural enterprise, they are constructing the humanities less as a circumscribed and endangered resource, or as a rarefied province whose few residents occasionally invite others to enter on guest passes, than as a common site and practical instrument of social production. This is an important conceptual and discursive step, if only (as we discovered) because it forces upon those inclined to take it some hard questions: to what sorts of new projects and relations should this commitment lead? Are we prepared — and do we know how — to enact them? And who now comprises, or should comprise, this "we"? Who, for example, initiates the "ongoing cultural conversation involving the range of university disciplines and the general public"? Who decides its focus or defines its benefits and its ends? What does the dangling, ambiguous "involving" actually involve?

Most often, it involves a lecture. The Distinguished Lecture Series or some variation thereof, is the predominant form of public program run by humanities institutes with a stated interest in off-campus communities. To be sure, such programs have their value. A time honored and readily producible university-community interface, the lecture (or the panel, symposium, exhibit, or short course that is its cognate in another format) may provide intellectual stimulation and enjoyment, widening the audience for the humanities as it demonstrates the range and vitality of humanistic modes of inquiry into the conditions of our existence. Yet it is also a measure of the distance still to be traveled toward the practice of the humanities, and perhaps of a residual resistance to that journey, that the lecture remains the most obvious outlet through which humanistic knowledge is applied — or, more accurately, displayed — in the current model of the engaged university, even for those organizations most committed to unsettling the hierarchies embedded in the humanities' traditional identity rhetoric.

Moving toward the practice of the humanities, as we understand it, demands that the public lecture, however engaging, be dislodged as the primary and expected means by which universities "reach out" to "the local community" or "the general public." The lecture is the standard-bearer of the outreach paradigm, and outreach is the wrong paradigm for the humanities' future. Structurally, outreach presumes a stratified, bifurcated, and unidirectional knowledge economy in which knowledge produced by elites in the academic center is offered for common consumption on the local periphery. We are not fool or populist enough to suggest by this critique that highly educated and experienced scholars have no stores of information, insight, and even wisdom that are not readily available to all. Our point, rather, is to emphasize the outreach paradigm's location within and reinforcement of the traditional hierarchy of professorial functions in the academy. Outreach exemplifies the least significant of these functions, "service," though it may apply research and constitute a short-term, minimally interactive form of teaching. At the same time, the outreach model reinforces conventional academic and public conceptions about the legitimate production and ownership of knowledge. A vital practice of the humanities, we believe, depends upon the breakdown of this hierarchy and this conception — institutionalized structures, we submit, that do not well-suit or represent the work of the humanities but stand as inapt borrowings from the models of the sciences and professions. Our knowledge is in a sense the opposite of the "expertise" that our colleagues across campus patent, license, and apply, and that precludes their relegation or self-relegation to the "province" of the sciences or professions. Their specialized claims and proprietary practices do not benefit us, whose goods grow and services deepen, rather, by infringement, divestiture, democratization.

These were not quite the philosophies that guided the UT Humanities Institute's programming in its inaugural year, when, in addition to forming an interdisciplinary seminar for selected faculty and graduate student Fellows, we also launched several programs that instantiated our "bolder" intention. We asked the two or three esteemed visiting scholars whom we brought in each semester to lead a session of the Institute seminar to give an evening lecture as well, written for a mixed academic and community audience. With the help of a Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation start-up grant, we persuaded school administrators in several local districts to offer two days of release time for K-12 teachers to come to the UT campus for intensive Teachers as Scholars seminars led by the university's most distinguished teaching faculty — a teacher-centered, inquiry-based professional development program focused not on enhanced classroom management, student test scores or direct curricular adaptations, but on the cultivation and renewal of public school teachers' intellectual excitement, community, and confidence. We partnered with the Austin Public Library and the Mayor's Office to establish the Mayor's Book Club, an annual city-wide reading campaign and discussion series that invites citizens to neighborhood libraries to converse about a shared book with faculty discussion leaders provided by the Institute, and we also recruited faculty members to be discussants on a number of panels put on in conjunction with the city's arts and cultural organizations. Drawing on the audiences for these programs, we established a "citizen-scholar" mailing list, which we

used to initiate Citizen-Scholar Summer Conversations, small monthly gatherings at private homes for conversations on topics proposed by our community subscribers.

Pleased with the avenues of town-gown engagement we had opened in our first year, we did not yet identify our public programs as exemplars of a traditional outreach or knowledge transfer paradigm that might be insufficient or obstructive to our civic ambitions. Yet the seeds for that recognition were already sown in the off-campus locations and dialogic formats of the Mayor's Book Club discussions and the Summer Conversations series. And fittingly, it was during one of these events that our Institute's shift towards a more collaborative and generative model for the public humanities officially and accidentally began.

At a Mayor's Book Club gathering that we attended as auditors in the fall of 2002, a middle-aged Latino man politely but emotionally contested another participant's appreciative assessment of the novel under discussion, Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima*. The book was not, for him, as it was for the white woman who had spoken previously, a classic coming-of-age story, Mexican-American in its characters and particulars but universally resonant. He had lived some of those particulars, and was troubled by Anaya's portrayal of them. The moment was rich in revelatory potential, an offered vehicle of communal examination and discovery that was only partially realized in the spirited discussion that followed. In the parking lot afterwards, in conversation with the discussion's faculty leader, it occurred to us that the promotional tag line for the Mayor's Book Club program — "What if all of Austin reads the same book?" — might be adapted to suggest a public humanities project bigger and different than any we had attempted: "What if all of Austin writes it?"

That "what if" turned into what we billed as a "city-wide life-writing and community discovery project" that, more than two years since it began and a year since it officially "ended," continues to surprise us with its momentum. Called Writing Austin's Lives, the project was conceived with two phases: we would elicit and collect family histories, personal experiences, and diverse visions of life in central Texas from a spectrum of community members and then share those stories with a broad public audience. To stimulate submissions, we framed the call for stories as a writing contest, inviting participants to send in short entries in response to writing prompts suggested by a team of university and community advisors. Throughout the five-month entry period, we actively campaigned to sound that call in and far beyond the city's writing circles. We placed ads in newspapers and ran radio public service announcements, made contact with schools, libraries, bookstores, community and religious centers, social service agencies and senior centers, and we hired a high-school student whose sole job was distributing flyers anywhere it seemed like people would be gathering in the Texas heat. We commissioned published Austin writers and skilled writing teachers to lead free life-writing workshops in public meeting rooms and private homes. And we started tracking participation on a blown-up map of the city on our office walls, using zip codes to locate neighborhoods in need of more attention.

These efforts paid off. Between April and August of 2003, we received close to 800 submissions. Over the next year we sponsored the production of an original play based entirely on stories submitted to the project, held thematic public readings, and put on a Grammy-style gala event to honor award winners (chosen by teams of volunteer readers) from all participating zip codes and schools. Finally, in the spring of 2004, we published a 400-page anthology of stories in English and in Spanish and donated the entire collection of submissions to the local history center's archive. Far from concluding the project, the book, called *Writing Austin's Lives: a community portrait,* turned out to be a beginning of its own, winning a "Best of Austin" award from one of the city's newspapers and inspiring two TV stations to film documentaries about the participants. In 2005, Austin's mayor chose the collection as the year's pick for the Mayor's Book Club, launching a whole new round of public programming sponsored by the city, the public library, local media organs, and the Humanities Institute — including an on-line site, searchable by author, theme, and neighborhood, for the publication of new stories.

We believed from the start that Writing Austin's Lives was an experiment in testing the conventional limits of university-sponsored humanities programs. The extraordinary public interest and involvement in this collaborative evocation of the human dimension of our shared geographic space was proof, had we needed any, that the humanities, as the Institute's new vision statement puts it, "encompasses all the forms of artistic expression, intellectual inquiry, and everyday experience through which people explore the meanings and challenges of human life." But the project's engagement of multiple and diverse constituencies — including constituencies not likely to have identified themselves as stakeholders in any of our more conventional public programs — was also demonstrable evidence of the impact of programming not patterned on the outreach model. To be sure, the campaign to collect and broadcast stories reflecting as many life experiences as possible involved us in extensive efforts to reach out to our city's communities. Yet the success of Writing Austin's Lives, we submit, lies in the fact that it asked participants to share in the incarnation of culture, not only its consumption.

Switching the toggle from consumption to production in effect overturned the top-down dissemination *from* the university *to* the community that our other public programs continued to reinforce. The people who sent in stories, volunteered to read hundreds of contest entries, or helped bring the amateur production of the stories to the stage became different sorts of stakeholders in the

project and in our Institute than the audiences for our public lecture series. And our stake and function shifted as well. We were not only imparting university-based knowledge to those already comfortable and confident enough to come seek it out, but using our resources to stimulate and then circulate the knowledge generated and expressed in the everyday lives of citizens across all our community's divides. This was, we should add, a much more labor-intensive role to play, more complicated and less controllable than anything demanded of us by our other ventures.

Writing Austin's Lives opened our eyes to the possibilities for humanities programs that dislodge the center-periphery model so ingrained in academic discourse about the humanities. It also made us intensely curious about the ways in which other community-oriented institutes and centers at UT conceived their missions and positioned themselves in relation to their external partners and constituencies. This curiosity led us, in the spring of 2004, to convene a colloquium of university researchers and program directors with professional investments in campus-community relationships. We described it as "a day of practical and philosophical discussion," inviting UT faculty and top-level administrators (including the Provost and Deans of Graduate Studies and Liberal Arts) to sit on a series of panels aimed at exploring the manifestations and meanings of the university's various community initiatives. Like other large public universities, ours has made much of its commitment to "academic engagement" in recent years. We wanted to gather evidence of what was actually happening on the ground — examples, testimony, models of programs and projects in operation across the disciplines — and to give colleagues involved in these efforts a chance to reflect critically on the institutional climate necessary for their work to thrive.

The day's conversations, as we initially conceived them, were decidedly in-house, aimed at promoting better understanding and perhaps more effective integration of the university's various modes of serving its peripheries. None of the panels included the "peripheral" stakeholders at all — something a colleague noted when, reviewing a draft outline of the event, she commented wryly, "Sounds like UT talking to itself again." Chagrined, we abandoned our plan to defer the extramural dialog to a second occasion, and attempted remedy. A panel was added, and four local non-profit directors with diverse histories of collaboration with the university were invited to offer their "Community Perspectives." We also asked the director of a local disability theater group, herself a recent Ph.D. in the humanities from our university, to sit on a faculty panel whose members had been asked to comment on the connections (or divisions) between their publicly-engaged work and their scholarship. These late-stage additions turned out to be critical to the direction of the day's conversations, and, as it happened, to the long-term impact of the colloquium on our Institute's activities and identity as well.

The institutional representatives who spoke at the colloquium — mostly leaders of campus units in the sciences and social sciences — charted a range of ways in which the university serves its publics, all to varying degrees centered on knowledge transfer. Whether disseminating cutting-edge scientific research to secondary school educators or applying university resources and manpower to problems identified by community agencies, the programs discussed hinged on the sharing and promotion of university expertise in response to real-world dilemmas. Faculty members speaking to the junction of their academic and community work described a much more flexible terrain for public scholarship. Whether they cast themselves as "service researchers" (an anthropologist), "mutual actors" (a landscape architect), "scholar-artist-citizens" (a theater and dance scholar) or "scholarly activists" (a communications professor), being publicly active involved recognizing their own alliances and memberships in multiple communities, a process of reorienting — if not dissolving entirely — the expert's stance. These were provocative perspectives, asking audience members (including the top-level administrators in the room) to recognize the collaborative, multi-stranded ways that scholars affiliated with a university put themselves and their knowledge to work for a greater public. But it was the panel's last-minute addition, the non-faculty member in the group, who demanded that we rethink the university's working definition of public scholarship in even more fundamental ways.

For Chris Strickling, director of Actual Lives, a performance ensemble project sponsored by VSA arts of Texas, being a "public scholar" was not a choice at all; it was the only logical designation for an unaffiliated scholar who rejected isolation. Though the link between Strickling's advanced academic degree in Disability Studies in the Humanities and her community work with a disability theater group was direct, continuing her scholarship from this occupational locus, as she pointed out, transformed her into a scholar adrift from, unrecognized by, and denied professional access to the university that sanctioned her academic work in the first place. "What happens," she asked, "when we understand public scholarship to include the intellectual work that takes place *outside* the university, by scholars, citizens, and artists who have no university affiliation? Why can't we demand the kind of broad civic access to the resources that make these projects possible?"

Strickling's questions strikingly reversed our initial "insider" colloquium's presumed agenda. The issue was no longer — or not solely — how to locate and support academic scholars in the public sphere, but how to locate and support already public scholars in the academic one. The resonance of this reversal was not lost on the colloquium's audience. The responses that followed centered on the university's obligation to accommodate the intellectual work and intellectual workers of its greater

community. One audience member, a nurse and activist who had attended several Humanities Institute public forums in the past, related his own frustration at no longer having access to the kinds of medical databases he used as a student and that he now required for an independent research project on differential health care access and treatment. Another recent Ph.D. from the university, now directing community relations for a local non-profit and continuing her research projects, asked the panel of administrators point blank: "Can we make this kind of deliberative space that's associated with universities available to more people?"

The non-profit directors on the afternoon's final panel picked up on that theme, describing their recurrent position as objects of research or hosts for student internships, and their desire for a different kind of university assistance. "A lot of time what people in non-profits are missing is time and space to think," said one executive director. "Help *us* raise questions, help *us* deliberate," said another, "Act as our catalyst." By the end of the day, the handful of community representatives in the room had begun to sketch out a tangible and imaginative set of "what if's" in answer to Strickling's challenge: What if independent scholars in Austin could apply to the university for expanded access to the university's resources — the kind of access routinely granted to visiting scholars from other universities? What if, instead of sending UT researchers out to do research *about* Austin's non-profit organizations and the people they serve, non-profit staff members had a chance to take this time away from their daily routines and do this research themselves?

These questions became the seeds for two new Humanities Institute programs that we launched in the spring of 2005 after a year of development with an advisory committee composed chiefly of the non-profit and community representatives who had spontaneously revised our colloquium's agenda. The Humanities Institute Research Associate Program provides Central Texans engaged in independent research with full access to library resources and with the opportunity to belong to a community of scholars. By giving "public scholars" professional status as researchers, the Research Associate Program translates the recognition that the university does not and should not have a monopoly on scholarship into an unusual level of broad-scale access to the resources that support good research. The Community Sabbatical Program takes that recognition a step farther. Funded by the Provost (who committed to support a "reverse sabbatical" proposal from the moment he heard the idea articulated at our colloquium) and administered in partnership with the Office of Graduate Studies' Professional Development and Community Engagement program, the Community Sabbatical program grants flexible leave time to employees of Central Texas's nonprofits, providing them with the tools they need (time, money, library access, and faculty research consultants) to work on finding solutions to problems that face their organizations and constituents.

This is not only community-*initiated* research; it is community-*actuated* research. Nonprofit staff members apply to the program with a specific research project in mind. Our job in facilitating the successful proposals involves intellectual matchmaking: identifying and soliciting faculty consultants whose expertise bears on each project and whose own research and teaching stands to be enhanced by the exchange. Currently, the director of a local arts organization is collaborating with the associate director of UT's Center for American Music to conserve, catalog, and digitize a massive musical, video, and print archive about the pre-1970s blues in Austin. A legal aid lawyer, whose proposal addresses the need for profession-specific Spanish language training modules for rural Texas lawyers, is developing a web-based curriculum with a research cluster consisting of the director of the Law School's Public Interest Law Center and a professor of Spanish who has consulted on similar projects with the Austin Police Department. The director of operations for a statewide advocacy organization is quantifying the economic impact of sexual assault on the state of Texas, with the assistance of a professor of Social Work and the associate director of UT's Bureau of Business Research.

Six such sabbatical projects are now up and running. In each case these are projects that would not otherwise have taken precedence in the busy organizational lives of the grantees. In each case, too, the projects intersect in dynamic ways with the academic work of their faculty consultants and offer them the opportunity to put their scholarly interests and expertise to use in civic arenas. But at its core the Community Sabbatical program is about facilitating the nonprofit grantee's own deliberative, sustained attention to his or her idea, and not about faculty members doing the work requested and required by community partners. Programs that involve community participants in the production of knowledge and culture bear out the ways that, to adapt Cornel West's construction, "deliberation matters" outside of the academy. Having stumbled and been pushed into the creation of such programs, we have increasingly come to view our role as humanists, and as institutional sponsors of the humanities, as one of recognizing and stimulating in public spaces and processes the kinds of deliberation usually associated with, if not restricted to, the academy. To the extent that the programs we have described here engage a mix of participants in active exchange of ideas and sustained deliberation about human life, and to the extent that they provide us with ways to measure and evaluate the impact of that deliberation, we believe they illustrate the humanities in practice.

Our recent programs and institutional trajectory reflect a growing trend. What *Imagining America*'s director Julie Ellison calls "campus-community border-crossing work" is starting to occur at

the boundaries of large research universities around the country, as various administrative entities within those universities sponsor initiatives that feature community participants in generative stances. Consider "Homelands," a documentary theater project sponsored by the University of Michigan's Arts of Citizenship program and Detroit's Matrix Theatre Company, which involved UM students and a neighborhood drama troupe in the conversion of local oral histories into performance; or the UCLA Center for the Study of Women's "Research Scholars" program, which, like our own Research Associate program, grants full library access and institutional support to independent scholars pursuing projects that fit the Institute's mission; or Temple University's Tyler School of Art, which jointly produces performances and educational programs with Art Sanctuary, a community arts organization in North Philadelphia. Such ventures rarely take simple deliverable forms, and they can be counted on to push their university sponsors and partners out of our academic comfort zones — figuratively, and often literally. That is one of their virtues and part of their promise.

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The best way to argue for the relevance of the humanities is not to keep asserting its value but to demonstrate what it is capable of doing, within, across, and beyond the university's walls. Who outside the academy would miss a humanities institute whose main role is to unite academics and to sponsor occasional lectures? Surely some would, but we cannot imagine a groundswell of public support — an outcry for the humanities — on behalf of institutes whose programming continues to be limited in that fashion.

We have no intention of abandoning our lecture series, seminars, or colloquia. Such programs continue to be popular and important ways our Institute carries out its mission to build intellectual community and stimulate occasions for discovery, dialog, and transformation. But we believe that the future of the humanities, by which we mean its economic as well as its philosophical security, lies in its commitment and aptitude to respond to a more radical challenge — one that David Scobey, Director of the Harward Center for Community Partnerships at Bates College, succinctly summarizes: "it is about creating new, place-based forms of intellectual cosmopolitanism by enlarging the range of partners and peers and languages and public effects in our work." Accordingly, we will continue our conceptual and programmatic efforts to move beyond the distribution of *our* university-stored knowledge, to enlarge our range of partners and peers by using the resources of the university to encourage others to produce, explore, and share *their* forms of knowledge. For it is and must be the business of the university — and, in particular, the work of academic humanists — to help give place and name and voice to humanities practices and practitioners in every human province.

Sylvia Gale is a graduate student in the Department of English and a Program Coordinator for the Humanities Institute at the University of Texas at Austin.

Evan Carton, a professor of English, is the Humanities Institute's Director.