

FY 09 Budget Request for Arts and Humanities Funding

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The president's FY 09 budget request will likely result in little change to the level of federal support for arts and humanities activity. With the exception of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, budgets are expected to maintain present levels. But as last year's final appropriations for the National Endowment for the Arts proved, congressional budget conferences could result in meaningful increases over the White House's requests.

For example, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) has once again been zeroed out (<http://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2008/nr08-61.html>) in the president's proposal, but most commentators expect NHPRC's funding to be reinstated by Congress. Such was the case in FY 08, when appropriations not only restored funding, but also gave NHPRC an increase of \$2 million over the previous year.

As the National Humanities Alliance (NHA) newsletter stated in its February 8, 2008 issue (<http://www.aascu.org/grc/pubs/GW/G08/G03/NHAAnnouncenewsletter.pdf>), "Many analysts predict that Congress will delay final passage of spending bills for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2008 until a new administration is in place." Despite the probable delay, it is likely that this proposal will serve as a blueprint for any new budgets going forward and it therefore remains worthy of examination.

National Endowment for the Humanities

The agency's total FY 09 budget request

(http://www.neh.gov/pdf/NEH_BudgetReq_FY2009.pdf) is \$144.4 million, an increase of \$3 million over the FY 08 request, but \$352,000 less than the FY 08 appropriation of \$144.7 million. These numbers suggest either that there will be a repeat of a small increase in funding or that the total will simply remain level as the dust settles in the months to come.

The biggest change in NEH's program budget would be the addition of almost \$5 million to the agency's *We the People* initiative. A large portion of this increase would support the new Picturing America initiative, which provides prints of famous American images and related course materials to primary and secondary schools and public libraries. Although no monetary awards are granted to "Picturing America" awardees, NEH Senior Program Officer Fred Winter states that the number of humanities research-related grants awarded to postsecondary institutions will decline due to the cost of implementing the new program. The exception to this will be NEH's various fellowship programs, which should remain at the previous year's levels of funding and competitiveness.

During GRC's February Web conference on digitally-related NEH grants, Winter stated that the best way for GRC member institutions to position themselves for NEH funding in the near future is through the agency's Digital Humanities Initiative, for which the agency has requested \$2 million in FY 09 support.

National Endowment for the Arts

The end of last year saw NEA's budget increase \$20.2 million, the largest single increase in the endowment's history since 1979, to a level of \$144.7 million. This flouted the president's proposed budget of \$128.4 million. Recent national recognition of NEA's work on its Operation Homecoming project could provide the impetus for a similar result for FY 09, bringing the agency closer to restoration of its FY 92 high of \$176 million. If Congress fails to act, though, \$16.3 million would be cut from NEA's current budget.

In that case, "direct grants would lose almost \$10 million, Challenge America would decrease by just under \$800,000, and the American Masterpieces program would remain funded at \$13.3 million, the level set for the initiative in this year's budget," according to the February 5, 2008 *Legislative Alert* (<http://www.nasaa-arts.org/nasaanews/leg-alert020508.htm>) by the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. These decreases would also result in \$7.2 million less for regional and state NEA partners. All of this would mean less money available to GRC members from NEA in the year to come.

Institute of Museum and Library Services

Following the trend of previous years, IMLS saw another significant boost in its FY 09 budget request (<http://www.ims.gov/pdf/06-09-Appropriations.pdf>). The increase this year would be \$26 million, bringing the agency's total budget to \$271.2 million. Programs across-the-board would receive a funding boost, with library grant programs receiving the largest increase, \$14.5 million. Museum grants would receive \$8.6 million more, but would remain the junior partner in the institute, at a total of \$38.5 million compared to library's \$214.4 million total.

Support for the Grants to States program's library grants would be increased to \$171.5 million. According to an IMLS press release (<http://www.ims.gov/news/2008/020408.shtm>) on the topic of the FY 09 proposal, "This amount will enable the full implementation of a law passed in 2003 to provide a more equitable distribution of state formula grants." \$26.5 million under library grants is set aside for Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program.

The support requested for museum grants includes \$3.8 million for Conservation Project support, \$22.2 million for Museums for America, \$2.1 million for 21st Century Museum Professionals, and \$1.35 million for Museum Grants for African American History and Culture.

National Historical Publications and Records Commission

A division of the National Archives, NHPRC is authorized at \$10 million per year (<http://historycoalition.org/issues/national-historical-publications-records-commission/>) through FY 09. The last two years have seen it removed from the president's budget proposal. Though Congress did provide \$9.5 million in FY 08 appropriations for NHPRC, the last time it receive its authorized \$10 million total was FY 04. At a session during GRC's 2008 Successful Proposal Development Workshop, NHPRC Program Officer Daniel Stokes was optimistic that the agency would return at least to the final FY 08 level by the time the FY 09 budget is appropriated.

Save America's Treasures Grant Program

Save America's Treasures (<http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/treasures/>), a program to provide grants to preserve nationally significant heritage resources, including buildings, films, books, and records, would receive \$15 million, a decrease of \$9.6 million from the previous year's appropriated total. The program is funded under the National Park Service's budget, but is administered in partnership with NEH, NEA and IMLS. \$10 million was set aside for Preserve America, an initiative launched in 2003 by President and First Lady Laura Bush to encourage states and local communities to partner with the federal government to preserve American history and culture. However, Congress did not fund the initiative in FY 08 and this pool of money could be used to maintain Save America's Treasures' current funding levels.