Science, Technology, and the Humanities:
Grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities

NEH is an independent U.S. federal agency, established in 1965.

Mission:
Because democracy demands wisdom, NEH serves and strengthens our republic by promoting excellence in the humanities and conveying the lessons of history to all Americans. The Endowment accomplishes this mission by awarding grants for top-rated proposals examined by panels of independent, external reviewers.

What are the humanities?
Learning history; understanding culture; debating values; thinking about ideas

“...the humanities include, but are not limited to, the study and interpretation of the following: language, both modern and classical; linguistics; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archaeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism, and theory of the arts; those aspects of social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods; and the study and application of the humanities to the human environment with particular attention to reflecting our diverse heritage, traditions, and history and to the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life.

National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act, 1965

NEH welcomes projects at the intersection of the humanities, science, and technology. Such projects might:
• provide the historical and social contexts for scientific developments
• analyze how technological innovation helps reshape cultures and understandings of our place in the world
• discuss the ethical and political implications of scientific and technological developments

Grants for Projects for Public Audiences

Public Humanities Projects
Exhibitions:
Supports juried, temporary exhibitions and traveling exhibitions available to public audiences in at least two U.S. venues, and single-site temporary exhibitions on view for 6-12 months.

Community Conversations:
Supports narrative discussion and other types of public programs on important topics and foster audience engagement with significant texts, collections, exhibits, artworks, pieces of music, or films.

Historic Places:
Supports interpretation of historic sites, houses, neighborhoods, and regions; interpretation might include living history presentations, guided tours, exhibitions, and public programs.

Sample funded projects with humanities/science/technology content:
- Improving the Literacy of Adults: 3-D Printout Valley Memorial Association
- Reflecting on the History of African American History: The Institute at Harvard University
- Supporting young people to understand and tell their stories: The Exploratorium

Digital Projects for the Public
Supports digital platforms like websites, mobile applications and tours, interactive touch screens, games, and virtual environments.

Proposed projects can either be exclusively digital or can be a digital component of a larger project.

Sample funded projects with humanities/science/technology content:
- Walden: A Game (Multi-Media Mobile App and Website) University of San Diego
- Immersive Ancient Egyptian Experience / Carnegie Museum of Natural History
- Game Innovation Lab, University of Southern California

Media Projects
Supports film, television, radio, and podcasting projects that engage general audiences in creative and appealing ways.

Sample funded projects with humanities/science/technology content:
- American Masters of Science: Charles Stark / NOVA
- American Experience: The Mother of Transistor / WBHI
- Across the Parks / Smithsonian Cygnus Productions

Sample funded projects with humanities/science/technology content:
- Immersive Ancient Egyptian Experience / Carnegie Museum of Natural History
- Game Innovation Lab, University of Southern California

The Exploratorium, along with humanities and science advisors, is designing a place-based mobile app that will allow users to discover elements of historical, cultural, and scientific interest about the world below their feet as they explore San Francisco’s downtown district.

The app’s geolocation function guides users to sites in downtown San Francisco and along the waterfront that offer opportunities to investigate the modern landscape in relation to historic features and events.

This project phase allows us to expand beyond basic interactive maps we have developed of some of the historic submerged features around the Exploratorium’s urban, coastal location. In this phase, we will design an app that widens the area of discovery and creates a plan for immersing museum visitors, city residents, and tourists in the maritime history of San Francisco’s downtown and waterfront areas through the story of the many Gold Rush ships that remain buried beneath the city.

The story of how these ships became part of the landscape provides an opportunity for us to engage the public in an exploration of the contemporary urban landscape. Stories include the area’s native habitation and cultural and natural history, the transformation of the coastline during the Gold Rush years of 1848-1859, archaeological investigations during modern development projects, and current environmental issues the city faces in planning for sea level rise, including the aging seawall infrastructure.

This project builds upon a strong foundation of work conducted by the Exploratorium, along with our humanities advisors and scientific partners, that has helped to create on-site exhibits and experiences that engage visitors in the cultural and natural history of the San Francisco Bay coastline through objects that rest in what was once a busy harbor.