

All Staff Presentation

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Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak about our experience with the National Humanities Alliance Humanities Advocacy Day 2023. Yelena and I were thrilled to be asked to attend by Adriene and jumped at the opportunity to support the humanities, a cause deeply important to both of us, in such a prominent way.

In short, Humanities Advocacy Day is an annual coordinated event wherein scholars, educators, librarians, publishers, and others meet with members of the House and Senate and their respective staffers to illustrate the vital importance of humanities education in the US and request voting action on funding packages, appropriations, and bills.

While Yelena and I were at first a little daunted by this task, our trepidations were quickly put to ease when we met our Maryland team which included Trevor Perry-Giles who is the Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs and Research in ARHU, a long-time supporter of the libraries, and a veteran of these advocacy events. The rest of our team consisted of, Greg Cambell from CCBC and Community College Humanities Association, another veteran, and faculty, researchers and graduate students who were newbies like us from Johns Hopkins, UMBC, PGCC, and organizations like Association of American Universities and the Linguistic Society of America . The Maryland deligation was 10 people strong, and one of the largest at the conference. Jordan and Yelena were the only librarians in our cohort.

We began our two-day advocacy journey with the National Humanities Alliance conference and advocacy training. The conference itself was in an absolutely beautiful building in Arlington with truly one of the best views of DC that you can ask for. In this conference we heard a moving keynote address from Jim Grossman, Executive Director of the American Historical Association, Steve Kidd, Executive Director of the NHA, Paula Krebs, President of the NHA and ED of the MLA, Trinidad Gonzalez from South Texas College, Jessie Brown, VP and Chief of Staff American Council on Education, and Janel George, Assoc Professor and Director of the Racial Equity in Education Law and Policy Clinic ad Georgetown University. This panel helped to contextualize and address misconceptions or outright bad-faith challenges to humanities education coming from the far-wings of the political fringes and devaluation and apathy towards humanities role in society by the general population.

Following this keynote, we attended various panels addressing humanities education and challenges; we focused primarily on the panels focused on higher education. Unfortunately there was very little conversation about libraries and IMLS programs. Most of what we heard on this topic was generated by our own speaking out, including a call to involve the library community in conversations around humanities.

-----YELENA-----

Every panel we attended either together or individually was invigorating and very substantive. It was nice to be in the presence of like minded people who care about the past, present and

future of humanities. One standout panel was a panel discussing the misconceptions about humanities education and the dangers inherent in the college scorecard and other quantification aspects of the higher education enterprise. Another important conversation touched up on misconceptions about recruitment of people with humanities degrees. In reality, based on some data presented at the conference, there are great opportunities for humanities majors that go beyond the traditional academic careers and with competitive pay that often people don't think about. Thus there is a great need to collect more data and for colleges and universities to educate their communities about career choices.

At the end of the day all participants of the conference were brought together to go over the NHA goals for the advocacy day and what to expect on the ground. We were given a short overview of the structure of the government and its budget. We were provided with important talking points for us to consider during our meetings. Each delegation received carefully crafted profiles of each representative that they were scheduled to visit. The list of the NHA humanities policy priorities for the upcoming budget were provided and explained, which this year addressed funding for NEH, NARA and Title VI, and which were reflected in the Dear Colleague Letters to each of the representatives. During this meeting, experienced lobbyists were giving pointers on what to expect and how to handle oneself while at the Capitol. After the general section, we all were broken by delegation where we had to go over logistics for the next day, including getting to know each other, determine when and where to meet, and to discuss talking points for each meeting. Maryland delegation had to visit 9 offices of senators and congressmen for which NHA staff have already set up schedule.

On the actual day of the event we met downtown in one of the office buildings containing senate offices. At first, we were a little nervous because much of the appropriations, bills, and funding talking points felt a little like another language, but soon after our first meeting, which went very well, we got comfortable and our team began to hit a stride with each of us naturally fitting into certain talking points and stories to relate. Yelena made a terrific point about Title VI historically supporting foreign language collections in libraries making them some of the best in the world, and how it relates to overall education of global citizens and American influence in the World. Jordan discussed another crucial point, the importance of humanities both in the higher education context and in public schools and gave some examples from his son's school, especially with the staff for David Trone, the representative in Jordan's district. One of the most receptive and outwardly enthusiastic meetings we had was with Rep. Jamie Raskin who, unsurprisingly, full-throated supported our cause and promised to support the funding we were seeking. Our conversation with Jamie Raskin over Zoom (due to his illness) was overheard by members of other delegations who later expressed their amazement and awe how lucky the MD is in our representatives. All but one of Maryland representatives have been enthusiastically supportive of humanities.

Overall, this was an amazingly powerful experience for both of us and was a terrific outlet for the library's voice to be heard at a very high level. We are happy to talk to anyone interested in this topic either individually or together. We will also have a poster presentation at the Library Research and Innovative Practice Forum on June 7.