



*Communication Matters: The NCA Podcast* | **TRANSCRIPT**  
Episode 5: The Humanities Episode

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**Participants:**

Trevor Parry-Giles  
Katherine Burton  
Stephen Kidd  
Daniel Fisher

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**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

Welcome to *Communication Matters, the NCA Podcast*. I'm Trevor Parry-Giles, the Executive Director of the National Communication Association. The National Communication Association is the preeminent scholarly association devoted to the study and teaching of communication. Founded in 1914, NCA is a thriving group of thousands from across the nation and around the world who are committed to a collective mission to advance communication as an academic discipline. In keeping with NCA's mission to advance the discipline of communication, NCA has developed this podcast series to expand the reach of our member scholars' work and perspectives.

**Introduction:**

This is *Communication Matters, the NCA Podcast*.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

Today's episode will focus on the impact of humanities generally with specific attention to the publicly engaged humanities projects. The humanities as you know is an overarching term for disciplines such as communication, rhetoric, anthropology, history, classical studies and cultural studies. These disciplines study various facets of the human experience through qualitative, ethnographic and critical and other forms of research. Today on *Communication Matters*, I'm speaking with Stephen Kidd and Daniel Fisher from the National Humanities Alliance or NHA. Also, joining me today is Katherine Burton, portfolio development specialist at Routledge, Taylor & Francis. You may recall that Taylor and Francis is NCA's publishing partner for our 11 academic journals and Kath has been a longtime friend of the association and of all of us who work at NCA. Hi, Kath. Thanks so much for joining us today.



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**Katherine Burton:**

Thanks, Trevor. It's lovely to be here with you all.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

So, Routledge, Taylor & Francis recently released an article and a book chapter collection entitled *Publishing in the Publicly Engaged Humanities*. Can you tell me a little bit about the origins of that collection and Routledge, Taylor & Francis' partnership with the National Humanities Alliance or NHA?

**Katherine Burton:**

So, the idea to showcase book and journal articles via the online collection was a truly collaborative effort with colleagues from the National Humanities Alliance. Now part of it was designed to amplify the Humanities for All database of publicly engaged projects that Daniel Fisher and others have created. There was also a great opportunity to highlight content from the Routledge portfolios across the humanities in a thematically linked way and promote the collection to an audience who we understood perhaps more anecdotally to be turning towards the public humanities in the course of their scholarship. What the collection identified was that if you are working as a publicly engaged scholar or consider yourself to be at the vanguard of the public humanities, publication in traditional journals and books is possible and has perhaps been happening for a while. So, the collection provided us with an opportunity for Routledge to collaborate with NHA and reach authors and readers who are actively engaged in building the public humanities through publication.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

This collection includes research from a variety of fields including history, English, ethics and rhetoric. How do these articles and book chapters reflect the broad values of public humanities projects do you think?

**Katherine Burton:**

So, I think that's a really great question, Trevor. I think it underscores why the collection has captured the imagination. Public humanities projects emphasize inclusivity, collaboration and diversification. For instance, what the public humanities projects included in the collections show is that there is an essential value in capturing all the parts of the work and the people involved in the publication process too. Just to give you an example, in Barry M. Goldenberg's *Rethinking History* article, he describes an experimental collaboration between graduate and public high school students that combines traditional historical methods with community engagement. The project used a mix of methods to co-create oral histories, online exhibits using Omeka and other secondary research. This provided the opportunity not only to showcase engagement practices between tertiary and secondary education institutions but to think about how history is taught and



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learned. In working with the community, the project produced research that would further the discipline and included future humanities knowledge makers in the process of determining historical practices for themselves. Now I do just want to recognize the role that digital practices play in the creation of public humanities projects and perhaps note a point of tension with current publication models.

As publishers, we need to diversify publication options for scholars so that we can incorporate the full range of work involved in projects not least in terms of digital or perhaps non-traditional outputs derived from this work. Things like project websites, digital collections and apps are often common outputs from public humanities projects but they're perhaps not easily incorporated into a peer review journal article or book and often sit alongside the final output. There is work being done here and with the integration of more open publishing models into existing workflows, we might see some more movement in the traditional space. But perhaps even more significantly than the integration of open digital into public humanities publication, we're also keen to show how the methodological aspects of doing engaged work are being captured in publication. This important aspect of doing public humanities work doesn't always find a place in long-form book or research articles and is not always included in evaluations of a scholar's work. But it is incredibly valuable to share what did and didn't work with others who may be embarking on their own projects or who are skilling up future scholars to become experts in this field of inquiry. Again, there's overlap here with some of the open digital scholarship practices in the humanities.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

Yeah. That speaks to the next thing I wanted to ask you about which is how we envision the sort of public impact of this kind of engaged humanities initiative. How do we get out of the scholarly publishing model exclusively to have a broader public impact to this work?

**Katherine Burton:**

In the current climate and very broadly speaking here, it really feels like publicly engaged humanities initiatives provide an opportunity for scholars to include what matters, not just what counts in their publication record. While what counts is still important not least while traditional evaluation measures remain in place for career progression, public humanities initiatives provide an opportunity to illustrate how knowledge contributes to a broader narrative beyond academia. For instance, initiatives such as the Being Human Festival that takes place in the UK each year highlight the value of the humanities in society and abet scholarly research and practice within the public setting. The impact of these initiatives may be somewhat more challenging to quantify than some other areas of scholarly inquiry but in terms of enriching community life, expanding inclusive and diversifying scholarly practices as well as rethinking what it means to be human, they are essential.



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**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

Yeah. That's I think really important and I know that the friends and colleagues that I have who are engaged in public humanities work really take that to heart and hope for a broader public impact beyond their sort of narrowly defined scholarly careers. Speaking of that, bringing this a little closer to home, Taylor and Francis, we're thrilled, has been our partner for several years now in publishing NCA's 11 academic journals. In that context, what do you think are the contributions that you've seen or that you hope to see in terms of this public humanities project from the discipline of communication?

**Katherine Burton:**

So, I'm excited to see more public scholarship from NCA's authors specifically and communication studies more generally especially given work around social justice, inclusivity and community engagement within the field and where NCA has also been leading. There are a couple of pieces on technical communication included in the collection that we thought would be appealing to an audience of applied communication scholars as well as the niche journal communities that those publications serve. And the Remembering Emmett Till Project provides a great opportunity to understand how digital outputs play into the publication of public humanities projects. What I think I would like to see, however, is more critical inquiry into public humanities projects and perhaps how that critical thinking can be woven more generally into pedagogy. I think comm is well-placed to engage in that inquiry especially given the rhetorical foundations of the field and applied and perhaps more digital practices that are emerging in areas within communication education.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

I know a lot of our colleagues in English and English literature have made much of the capacity of digital humanities work to bring text to life, for instance, in the interactive ways and I like what you suggested there about the critical component because often those sort of invite a less robust kind of criticism and I agree. I think communication is nicely poised to do that. What sort of publishing advice then would those of you at Taylor and Francis have for our colleagues and our academics who were involved in these public humanities types of projects?

**Katherine Burton:**

Yeah. That pressure to publish as linked to a promotion, tenure and career progression more generally drives scholars to publish more and in ways that will fit a prescribed evaluation model perhaps. But increasingly, there are opportunities as I think some of articles in the collection illustrate to publish all the parts of the process in traditional journals and books. And if there's one thing that the collection has shown us is that editors, books, publishers and journals are embracing public humanities. So, pick up a conversation, use the collection as inspiration and pitch your project to editors who've already indicated their interest in the public humanities. Above all though, think about your audience and who you want to reach through publication. That's a good general



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principle for any aspiring author but perhaps with public humanities projects, there's a need to consider a broader range of potential audiences. So, perhaps consider starting a blog to run alongside your project so you can share parts of the process as they evolve and possibly test ideas as they emerge. And crucially perhaps, given the community involvement in public humanities projects, provide a connection for your collaborators who might be situated outside of academia.

That all being said, I do recognize that there are challenges associated the public humanities and publication. I hope we'll have more to talk about in collaboration with NHA soon but given the positive response to the collection to date, we've been inspired to do more to support public humanities researchers and practitioners and have just kicked off a project with nine field leading experts who will be creating model practices for public humanities and publication. The output from that project will be shared at the National Humanities Conference in November and is intended to continue the conversation about how to get published if you're doing public humanities work. We anticipate that the group will create some useful guidance and outline publication opportunities for the growing community of publicly engaged scholars now emerging.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

I know that many of the individuals involved in the public and digital humanities communities are also engaged in urging promotion, tenure and university administrative committees to rethink what counts as scholarship and I think that's a positive development as well. And I'm really appreciative of you joining us today, Kath, and talking about this exciting new initiative at Taylor and Francis.

**Katherine Burton:**

Well, thanks to you, Trevor, and everybody NCA for this opportunity for talking a little bit more about the collection and what we've got on the horizon for public humanities and publication.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

I hope that we will see many more public humanities publications in the future at NCA journals and with our friends Taylor and Francis. So, thanks again. Now let's turn to Stephen and Daniel from NHA. Founded in 1981, NHA is a coalition of more than 200 organizations including universities and scholarly associations like NCA. NHA brings together these organizations to develop best practices, for advocating for the humanities and to advocate for federal funding for the humanities overall. NHA also works to promote the public value of the humanities. We're thrilled that Stephen Kidd who is the executive director of NHA and Daniel Fisher who is the project director for the Humanities for All project are joining us today. Humanities for All is a particularly unique initiative that promotes publicly engaged humanities work and it showcases more than 1,500 projects including public lectures, community-based research and service-learning projects. These projects demonstrate that engaged teaching and research in the



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humanities strengthens our communities, leads to better learning experiences and advances humanity scholarship. Thank you, guys, for coming and joining us today. This is great. Today we'll be discussing the NHA annual meeting, the National Humanities Conference that's coming up in November of 2020 and the Humanities for All initiative. So, let's start with you, Steve. Thanks for joining us.

**Stephen Kidd:**

Thank you.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

A few questions about NHA so that our listeners can know what NHA is all about. Can you tell us a little bit about how NHA got started, what some of its goals are, the programs and initiatives it pursues, that sort of thing?

**Stephen Kidd:**

Sure. Yeah. NHA was founded as you said in 1981 when the Reagan administration was trying to drastically cut funding for the National Endowment for the Humanities. At that time, a group of humanities organizations from across the spectrum—so including scholarly societies, individual colleges and universities, libraries, museums, state humanities councils—came together to speak against those cuts with one voice. They founded the NHA to be that voice to organize the community to go to Capitol Hill, go to the administration and tell the story about the public value of the NEH. From that time though, our mission has been much broader than that to include advocating for the public value of the humanities more broadly. In recent years, we've really focused on that second part of the mission along with maintaining a focus on advocating for federal funding on Capitol Hill. We do the advocacy for the public value of the humanities through three initiatives, one being the Humanities for All initiative that Daniel will talk about. Then also, an initiative called Study the Humanities which advocates for the value of studying the humanities as an undergraduate. And then we have an initiative called NEH for All which is really digging into the community impact of NEH-funded projects.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

Can I probe a little bit on that second one, the Study the Humanities initiative? We know a lot of our sister disciplines our friends in history, language and literature, philosophy and the like are lamenting the fact that they've seen really steep declines in both enrollments in their courses at the undergraduate level and in numbers of majors, students majoring in their disciplines. We've noticed that at the annual meeting and advocacy days, there are workshops on recruiting students to the humanities. I'm assuming this flows out of the Studying the Humanities initiative. What can we expect to see at those workshops? In other words, how do we persuade undergraduates to major in the humanities?





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**Stephen Kidd:**

Right. So, the Study the Humanities initiative is funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the idea behind it is that we need to come together as a community to make an affirmative case for the value of studying the humanities. We have to work on outreach to various audiences including students themselves but also their parents to talk to them about why they should think about studying the humanities as an undergraduate. We observed through other work we were doing that there were efforts going on on individual campuses to market the humanities to students, to pursue curricular innovation that would make the humanities more interesting and seemingly more relevant to students and their interests. And we decided that we needed to learn more about these initiatives and create a community of practice in which those who are pursuing them now or interested in pursuing them in the future could exchange knowledge, best practices on this kind of work. So, at the NHA annual meeting, we'll be having a series of workshops that feature projects we've learned about through a survey, the humanities recruitment survey that we've been doing over the past year. So, folks will learn about initiatives on individual campuses and then have the opportunity to brainstorm with others who are also interested in undertaking more concerted efforts to recruit students and then present their ideas back to the group.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

What are some of the best practices that you're seeing? I mean I'm curious about some of these arguments that people are making because I know that this is a real concern across the nation in a lot of humanities areas. Any kind of preview?

**Stephen Kidd:**

Sure, yeah. So, one thing we've learned about is the power of cohort groups, bringing undergraduates in for a special experience focused on an array of humanities disciplines, interdisciplinary work and giving them that special orientation toward the humanities and what they are and do.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

Prior to them coming to college.

**Stephen Kidd:**

Prior to them coming to college.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

While they're trying to decide in recruitment?

**Stephen Kidd:**



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Right. Other things that we've seen so far are instilling a marketing mindset in your teaching. So, that might just be paying attention to the way in which you're framing your class as part of a broader humanities curriculum and talking to students about what they might expect to do after they've taken your course or after they've majored in a subject. And then there are all kinds of career pathway kinds of initiatives that are focused on working with career counseling offices and employers to talk to them about what humanities majors can bring to the workplace. But ensuring that potential humanities majors also understand that employers are in fact interested in their skills.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

And we know that from just about every employer survey that comes out.

**Stephen Kidd:**

That's right.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

Tell us that. The interesting thing from the communication standpoint is that we have not seen the declines in enrollments or majors that many of our other disciplines have had. But I've always not seen this as a zero-sum game, right? That we're all in this together and as we look at looming enrollment declines across the board, across all the university sectors, this issue of promoting the humanities can be really important.

**Stephen Kidd:**

Right.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

On the flip side in terms of advocacy days and budgeting and the federal budget for research in the humanities, NHA was very quick to note and celebrate that the latest round of budget negotiations saw a pretty substantially increase for NEH funding and the largest increase I think you guys said in a decade that's which is fantastic. But I'm wondering if you might think about or let us know how you think NHA's work and the advocacy that we've been doing for the last decade have made a difference. Do you think there's any kind of—I'm not suggesting a causal correlation—but do you think there's any kind of meaningful connection to be found in those increases?

**Stephen Kidd:**

Yeah, absolutely. I think that the increases are a testament to the number of advocate who have been coming to Washington and engaging their elected officials and talking to them about their own work and the impact of NEH-funded humanities projects in their state and in their district. We





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really provide a context platform for those of you who are around the country doing this work to come to Washington to talk about your work in your own words and that's what really connects with members of Congress. And the growing amount of support on Capitol Hill for the NEH and for humanities work in general is really due to both the work that is being done around the country in the humanities and its impact but the work that advocates do coming here and talking with their elected officials. It's all of those advocates who really should get credit for these increases.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

That's great especially with the hostility I think from the administration on a lot of these questions. It's nice to see that Congress has our back if you will.

**Stephen Kidd:**

Yeah. Congress really gets it. They really understand the impact of all of this funding in their districts in a way the administration just has not paid attention to.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

I've been actively advocating with NHA for the last few years and one of the points that we always make when we go to Capitol Hill is talking about the local impact. What other arguments do we make for continued federal funding for the humanities that might lead to even more increases in the future?

**Stephen Kidd:**

Yeah. I mean local impact is one of the strongest ones but then there are also impacts that address certain societal needs. One thing we've been talking quite a bit about is the role that the humanities can play in times of personal and community crisis. So, we just did a briefing on Capitol Hill last month involving veterans programs and we brought veterans in to talk about ways in which reading literature and having discussions about that literature with groups of veterans and community members helped them deal with their sense of isolation and help them connect more on their campus and in their community. So, these kinds of programs really have policy outcomes that lawmakers care about in their own communities but beyond their community as well.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

Alongside of the annual meeting and advocacy days, another initiative that NHA has been pursuing over the last few years is the National Humanities Conference. How long have you guys been doing this?

**Stephen Kidd:**

This was our fourth year.



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**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

Fourth, the one in Honolulu this past November.

**Stephen Kidd:**

That's correct.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

So, in 2020 the National Humanities Conference is going to be November 5th through the 8th in Indianapolis, Indiana. Coincidentally, this is just a few days before the NCA annual conference also to be held in the same city, Indianapolis, Indiana. And like NCA, the Humanities Conference has a similar theme so Humanities at the Crossroads or something along those lines and NCA's is Communication at the Crossroads. I'm wondering besides the obvious Indiana connection, what do you think about humanities at the crossroads? What does that mean as a context for your conference?

**Stephen Kidd:**

Yeah. So, we are looking at various facets of crossroads as a concept. One crossroads as a place of decision, one as crossroads as freedom, one as crossroads as uncertainty and then one crossroads as intersection. So, crossroads is a pretty capacious concept and we expect folks to come at it from a lot of directions. In terms of thinking about humanities broadly at a crossroads, I think all four these facets can apply to our thinking about the humanities at this time. My favorite one I think is the crossroads as uncertainty and this is an idea that the crossroads is a kind of transformational place and it's a liminal place where you're neither here nor there but going through some process of renewal, some process of transformation. And you think about the humanities is constantly going through a process of transformation. It's about analysis and questioning. And the concept of uncertainty is also supposed to apply to our engagements with the humanities, that the humanities can make us uncertain about where we are while trying to find reference points and grounding. And that public programs in particular in the humanities can emphasize this uncertainty. You're bringing a group of people together to read, reflect, discuss things and you don't know what's going to happen exactly with that. It's an uncontrolled situation but it's also a situation with enormous promise and possibility. So, with our emphasis on public engagement, this is a place of uncertainty for scholars who are engaging audiences maybe in ways they haven't before and it's also for our communities who are using the humanities as a way to ask questions of themselves and to maybe move into new terrain.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

There's an opening there for communication scholarship I think when we talk about the public engagement of the humanities. You're fairly familiar with the discipline and with what we're all



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about. Do you think NCA folks should think seriously about doubling up on their Indiana conferences this fall?

**Stephen Kidd:**

I think they absolutely should. The unique thing about the National Humanities Conference is that it brings folks together from across the disciplines but also from various kinds of organizations. So, the idea behind it is to bring together those who are working in an academic context with those who are working in organizations outside of the academy.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

Don't you co-sponsor with the State Federations of Humanities Councils or something?

**Stephen Kidd:**

We do. So, we have been hosting the meeting with this state humanities councils and it's really geared toward fostering more collaboration between the humanities councils and those who are based at higher ed institutions. So, the extent to which we have more voices in that it just becomes a stronger and stronger event and a more generative kind of environment.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

That's great. That's also a good segue by the way to discussing Humanities for All and talking about the work that NHA does in terms of humanities in the public realm and in the public space. NCA has been really pleased to partner with NHA for a lot of years and this good work is fantastic. I'm wondering, Daniel, as the project director of Humanities for All, how you would describe it and what its goals are all about? And then we'll talk more specifically about the ways in which communication scholars are a part of the Humanities for All effort.

**Daniel Fisher:**

Absolutely. Thank you so much for having me here. Over the last 20 years, we at NHA and others across the humanities have observed a real increase in the level and quality of publicly engaged work across the U.S. This includes research, teaching, preservation and programming conducted with and for diverse public groups. We're interested in supporting that as an organization for a couple of reasons. First, it broadens the horizons of humanities work. It allows us to do new kinds of research, to teach in innovative and engaging ways, to preserve more of our shared cultures and to create programming that really connects with all kinds of folks. So, with the generous support of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, we launched Humanities for All to document, to promote and really to build capacity for publicly engaged work in higher ed. To document and promote this work, we began by surveying the state of the field. We collected, as you mentioned, before over 1,500 examples of research, teaching, preservation and programming initiatives. We think of it as a kind of representative rather than comprehensive cross-section of the field. We



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built a website, HumanitiesforAll.org to house this database and to allow scholars and folks from all over to dig into the data.

We provided three ways into the data. First, a database that's searchable and sortable along a wide range of axes. You can sort it by discipline, you can sort it by region, you can sort it by theme. Each project is tagged in a number of ways. We wrote over 50 profiles of projects that represent really the range of work in the field. You can see how others have done what they've done. You can dig in and you can really be inspired. So, you can see if you're working in a humanities center what other faculty and humanities centers have done. If you're working in communication studies or rhetoric, you can see what your colleagues have done and you can think broadly about what you could do. We've also written three essays that outline patterns in the field and the data that we collected. The first builds a kind of rough typology of five types of projects that we observed. The second outlines a set of overarching goals that we found most of the projects sought to achieve.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

What are some of those goals?

**Daniel Fisher:**

They do things like inform contemporary debates, helping people make sense of things like race and culture. They amplify community voices and histories. So, they go out into the world and they conduct oral history research. They dig into archives and they share that with broad audiences, telling untold stories and amplifying the voices of those who have not always been heard by all. They can also help individuals and communities navigate difficult experiences. For example, there's a great many projects that involve veterans in reading literature that helps them make sense of and give voice to their experiences of war. They're expanding educational access. They're creating resources for K-12 teachers, K-14 teachers. They're also creating programming for folks that have not had access to the humanities. They're also preserving culture in times of crisis and change. When you go out and give voice to community voices and histories, you're preserving those voices. Partnership is really key to many of these projects. And so, we've collected through interviews with project directors thoughts on what it means to be a partner and how they went about building their partnerships. It can be complex but it is almost always rewarding.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

Great And those essays are available on the Humanities for All website?

**Daniel Fisher:**

Yes, absolutely. They're on HumanitiesforAll.org.



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**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

Great, great. As are some of these communication projects that you're going to highlight.

**Daniel Fisher:**

Yes. I can think of two that really represent the range of work in the field. The first example is the Emmett Till Memory Project. It's a partnership led by Dave Tell of the University of Kansas and the Emmett Till Memorial Commission. In 2007, historical markers commemorating Emmett Till were installed and rather quickly became the target for vandals. They were sprayed with bullets. They were scraped of their words and some uprooted and thrown in the river. In 2014, Tell and Patrick Weems of the Emmett Till Memorial Commission launched the Emmett Till Memory Project to respond to these acts of vandalism by creating digital memorials that really couldn't be defaced. So, together they led a team to build a GPS-enabled smartphone app that takes visitors to 18 sites related to Till's murder and the trial in the Mississippi Delta and at each site, the app provides the perspective of folks that were associated with that site. So, if you're at the courthouse, you can see how jurors might have made sense of the situation at the time. If you're where the black press stayed, you could get their version of the story. These are very different stories and as Tell says, that's the point.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

Memory project is about all of the various dimensions of the Emmett Till case if you will, right?

**Daniel Fisher:**

Yes.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

Okay.

**Daniel Fisher:**

And it provides a public and engaging access.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

And as a plug, Dave Tell's book on the Emmett Till Memory Project is out from the University of Chicago presently. I think it's been fairly well-received and so just put in a plug there for Tell's scholarship.

**Daniel Fisher:**

It's a wonderful example of how public engagement can also lead to academic publication.



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**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

Indeed. Right.

**Daniel Fisher:**

Now the second example that comes to mind is the DNA Discussion Project led by Anita Foeman and Bessie Lawton at West Chester University of Pennsylvania. The project uses commercially available DNA testing to open up conversations about race and identity. It's informing contemporary debates.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

That's great.

**Daniel Fisher:**

Participants have their DNA analyzed. They spit in a test tube and they do pre and post surveys and then they discuss whether the results were what they expected, what does it mean for their understanding of their race, their self and their community. Comparison of these surveys has enabled research on, for example, how interracial individuals might conceive of their race and identity after DNA testing reveals whatever it reveals.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

So, for all of our listeners who are not Dave Tell and Anita Foeman and her colleagues, how do they get included into the database? Say if somebody's doing work engaged in public humanities projects, how do they become a part of Humanities for All?

**Daniel Fisher:**

Well, they go to [HumanitiesforAll.org/grow](http://HumanitiesforAll.org/grow). We really would welcome any and all contributions of publicly engaged communication work to better represent the field as it grows and as it engages new and different groups. Early this year, we're also launching a blog to feature writings by outside authors on [HumanitiesforAll.org](http://HumanitiesforAll.org) and there's something you've been thinking about, I'd really encourage you to reach out to me via the website and we can talk.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

Certainly take advantage of the opportunity to further disseminate your work to broader publics and to demonstrate its value. Thanks, Daniel. This is fantastic talking about the important work that you guys are doing. I'm interested in a sort of conclusionary way to talk about how we would generally think about the public value of the humanities, what we would normally understand in sort of a follow up on both of these topics how it is we entice or induce young people to find their interest in the humanities but also the broader public value of the humanities. How would you all describe the public value of the humanities?





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**Stephen Kidd:**

Well, we're actually very interested in that question right now and being able to further articulate the public value. And as part of all three of our main initiatives, we have been doing some surveying work to help us really gain a deeper understanding of what participants in various kinds of humanities engagements gain from that experience. So, we have been surveying undergraduates who are in focus humanities cohorts. We've been surveying undergraduates who are doing publicly engaged humanities work then also participants in community preservation projects, teachers who do summer workshops and gain deeper understandings of various communities that they then bring back to the classroom. So, in that sense, we are learning about ways in which the humanities foster community pride, help individuals deal with trying or disorienting kind of situations. We are so very interested in the broader public goods that come out of the presence of the humanities in communities. We will be embarking on a new project that is focused on broad community impacts so looking at what it means to a community to have a museum dedicated to its history, what it means to a community to know that the NEH is supporting preservation work there. So, the idea is that there are broader public goods that come from these activities that stretch beyond the individual participation impact which is robust and we are getting great information about that but that there are broader goods to our society and that those include students studying the humanities, that that is not just an individual return on investment issue. It is a broader civic and societal benefit.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

One of the more persuasive appeals we usually make on Capitol Hill when we're talking about funding that always seems to work with the members of Congress that we talk to is the historical newspapers, the local newspapers digitizing process.

**Stephen Kidd:**

That's right.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

Because again, it's the record and the real history of very localized communities that that project seeks to preserve.

**Stephen Kidd:**

That's right and that's a really unique partnership between the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Library of Congress usually working with state libraries to fund the preservation and digitization of historical newspapers in communities around the state that then those newspapers become resources for individual community members but students and teachers and researchers as well. So, it is a very powerful example. But one of our goals is to be



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able to tell this story of broad public impact to various kinds of policymakers because these impacts are happening. People appreciate the humanities in their communities but as a policy matter, the humanities are largely invisible on local and state levels and with private funders to an extent and many of them are interested in the policy outcomes that can come from the humanities but they don't make that connection.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

In a way, it appears to me that we're sort of behind the curve on that demonstration of impact. You think about the power that science, biomedical research, STEM disciplines, etc. have had in securing funding and in demonstrating their impact. We're sort of playing catch-up on that.

**Stephen Kidd:**

We need to be making the case constantly and in perpetuity. It's just something that we as a community of scholars and practitioners need to infuse our everyday work with.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

When you talk about students in particular too, right, particularly undergraduate students, this question of employability always comes up and again, perhaps the humanities is behind the curve a bit. The STEM disciplines and the more professional or pre-professional disciplines are able to overtly demonstrate their employability of the major. How do you think the humanities go about, what do you guys think about the ways to really develop that employability question in ways that don't sacrifice what the humanities can contribute but still answers the question for parents and for prospective college students?

**Stephen Kidd:**

Right. We need to do more than one thing at a time. We need to address the employment issue and the facts are actually quite strong that humanities major gained employment at rates that are very similar to other areas of study and that employers are looking for humanities majors to fill jobs. So, we need to address what are real concerns from parents and students. They are investing a lot of money in education and they want to make sure that they have a secure future. So, we need to take that seriously and we can. At the same time, we need to talk about what are the unique contributions of the humanities outside of employability, what studying the humanities contributes to a life well lead and an ability to foster strong and civically engaged communities.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

Well, as I said, NCA has been pleased to partner with NHA and we look forward to continuing those efforts and those initiatives. Thank you so much, Steve Kidd and Daniel Fisher from NHA for joining us today.



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**Stephen Kidd:**

Thanks for having us.

**Daniel Fisher:**

Thank you so much.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

And if anybody out there is interested, look for announcements about the NHA annual meeting and advocacy days. NCA regularly publicizes those events every year and the National Humanities Conference again this year in November in Indianapolis. You can find all information about that at the National Humanities Alliance website which is...

**Stephen Kidd:**

NHAlliance.org.

**Trevor Parry-Giles:**

NHAlliance.org or link to it from Natcom.org, the NCA website. Listeners, we hope you've enjoyed this lively discussion of the value of the humanities and the work that NHA does.

In NCA news, NCA's latest C-Brief reports on faculty attitudes toward technology, using data from inside higher ed. According to the C-Brief, as of 2019, only 46% of college and university faculty reported having taught an online course compared with 98% of faculty members who have taught face-to-face courses. However, the number of faculty who teach online courses continues to increase and faculty members who have taught online are more likely to agree that online teaching is as effective as face-to-face teaching. You can find the full C-Brief at [Natcom.org/cbriefs](http://Natcom.org/cbriefs).

Also in NCA news, you still have time to submit to the NCA 106th annual convention with the theme Communication at the Crossroads. You can submit via NCA's Convention Central. The deadline to submit proposals for the convention is Wednesday, March 25th at 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time. Nearly 100 NCA interest groups, affiliate organizations and special series have issued calls for submission and to review those calls, click the view calls tab at NCA Convention Central. You're encouraged to submit early and ask questions in advance of the deadline. For tips and suggestions for submitting your work as well as professional guidelines for participants, visit the convention resource library at [Natcom.org/convention](http://Natcom.org/convention).

In other NCA news, recently NCA's quarterly Journal of Speech published "*What to Do When You're Raped*": *Indigenous Women Critiquing and Coping through a Rhetoric of Survivance* by Valerie N. Wieskamp and Cortney Smith. According to the article, native women are more likely to be raped than women of other races and ethnicities. Statistics show that non-native men



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perpetuate the vast majority of assaults on Native women. Wieskamp and Smith examined the Illustrated handbook, *What to Do When You're Raped: An ABC Handbook for Native Girls*, which was produced in 2016 by Native American community leaders through the lens of survivance rhetoric which addresses sexual violence in the context of settler colonialism. The *What to Do When You're Raped* handbook challenges settler colonialism and offers resources for Native women and girls when in crisis. To read this article, if you're an NCA member and the entire NCA library, visit [Natcom.org/journals](http://Natcom.org/journals).

Upcoming *Communication Matters* episodes will feature Chuck Morris, professor and chair of the department of communication and rhetorical studies at Syracuse University and the new chair of NCA's research council. Chuck will be speaking with us about communication research in the area of rhetoric and LGBTQ history as well as some of the NCA Research Council's goals for 2020. We'll also talk to Tom Nakayama, professor of communication studies at Northeastern University and one of the five newly installed the NCA distinguished scholars from 2019. Tom will be speaking with us about research on whiteness and international and intercultural communication. So, stay tuned for these upcoming *Communication Matters* episodes in the coming weeks.

Be sure to engage with us on social media by liking us on Facebook, following NCA on Twitter and Instagram and watching us on YouTube. And before you go, hit subscribe wherever you get your podcasts to listen in as we discuss emerging scholarship, establish theory and new applications, all exploring just how much communication matters in our classrooms, in our communities and in our world. See you next time.

**Conclusion:**

*Communication Matters* is hosted by NCA executive director Trevor Parry-Giles and is recorded in our national office in downtown Washington DC. The podcast is recorded and produced by Assistant Director for Digital Strategies Chelsea Bowes with writing support from Director of External Affairs and Publications Wendy Fernando and Content Development Specialist Grace Hébert. Thank you for listening.

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