The Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities

In 1989, Vanderbilt’s Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities was awarded a $480,000 Challenge Grant from the NEH to assist in establishing a permanent endowment for the program. The grant had to be matched 4:1 with funds from the private sector, which helped to leverage an additional $1.9 million. This award signifies the nationally recognized achievements of the center and helps to ensure its long-term future. The center facilitates interdisciplinary research in the humanities and social sciences, hosting annual faculty fellows, including one visiting faculty member from outside the university. It also has an annual graduate fellowship program. The center often collaborates with partners from across the campus and Nashville to provide opportunities for humanistic excellence.

Two Vanderbilt researchers awarded NEH grants to support books

Marshall Eakin, professor of history, was awarded a grant to complete his book *Shadows of the Soul: Brazilian Identity in the Twentieth Century*. Humberto Garcia, associate professor of English, was awarded a grant to support research for his second book project, *Romanticism Re-Oriented: Indian Authors and English Literary Culture, 1770–1830*.

Syriaca.org preserves endangered cultures

NEH funding has allowed Vanderbilt professor David A. Michelson to collect and preserve essential historical information about the Syriac minorities of the Middle East. Syriac is a dialect of Aramaic, which was once a primary language of trade and culture in the Middle East and is still used by minority communities in the region. Historical documents surviving in Syriac are vital for understanding the history of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and other religions. As the general editor of Syriaca.org, Michelson has overseen the publication of the *Syriac Gazetteer*, an online geographical dictionary to document the memory of Syriac churches, monuments, and other places now threatened by civil war. The *Syriac Gazetteer* is the first of several NEH-funded reference works published by Syriaca.org. Michelson and colleagues received an NEH Preservation and Access Grant in 2015 that will support three new reference works.

Geospatial tools to map colonial Peru

Steve Wernke, associate professor of anthropology, received an NEH Digital Humanities grant to prototype two resources for collecting and analyzing geospatial data related to the Spanish colonization of Peru. Researchers studying ancient cultural transformation face challenges due to fragmentary and patchy information. In the Andean region, where no written record exists prior to 1532, understanding social transformations is challenging, but spatial tools can aid in reconstructing history. With this grant, Wernke and colleagues will develop two geospatial aids: 1) a crowd-sourced, linked open online gazetteer—a geographical atlas—and 2) a geospatial database and interface for producing thematic and analytical maps. These tools will be used to produce the most comprehensive settlement map of colonial Peru to date and serve as a model for spatially integrating fragmentary historical information.

Studying Cold War human rights movement

Shaul Kelner, associate professor of sociology and Jewish studies, received an NEH grant to aid study of cultural dimensions of the Soviet Jewry movement during the Cold War. Kelner’s research covers the time period from 1963 to 1991, when a grassroots campaign in the United States sought emigration rights for persecuted Jews in the Soviet Union. Kelner’s study will contribute to a better understanding of what the Cold War era meant to diverse American communities and examine a model of American religion helping to promote human rights around the world.

For more information, please contact Vanderbilt’s Office of Federal Relations:
Christina West (202) 216-4370 • Gabriella Ra’an an (202) 216-4368 • federalrelations@vanderbilt.edu

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