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Humanities Center Annual Report 2018-2019

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2018-19

HUMANITIES CENTER ANNUAL REPORT

 University of San Diego®

HUMANITIES CENTER

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



I am delighted to present the third annual report on the activities and achievements of the University of San Diego's Humanities Center. It continues to be a great pleasure for me to direct this vibrant center and to see its activities grow and embed themselves in our campus community and beyond.

From its inception, the Humanities Center has been built upon a multielement foundation, and the 2018-19 accomplishments of each of these elements — [collaborative research](#), [digital humanities](#), [interdisciplinary curriculum development](#), [public humanities](#) and [the Humanities Center Gallery](#) — are outlined in the pages that follow. With such an array of events and initiatives to survey, it is not at all easy to isolate highlights from the last year. Truly notable, however, were the exhibitions of work by the artists Joan Jonas and Joan Perlman, and events featuring Chelsea Clinton, Ian McEwan and Admiral William McRaven. The work of this year's cohort of Keck undergraduate humanities research fellows has also been an astonishingly encouraging highlight and attests both to the fruitfulness of the [W. M. Keck Foundation grant we received in 2016](#) and to the center's success in attracting undergraduate students to the world of the humanities.

[Very special words of thanks should be given to Carol Vassiliadis. The existence of the Humanities Center was made possible by her generous donation, and Mrs. Vassiliadis's support for our work was made even more manifest in 2018 when she provided further funds to establish the endowed A. Vassiliadis Directorship of the Humanities Center.](#)

It is my great honor to be the very first holder of that position and to be at the helm of a center that continues to provide extraordinary intellectual and cultural programming to all the people of San Diego.

In all of its programming, the Humanities Center has stayed faithful to the vision expressed in our founding mission statement, namely to [provide a home for the free exploration of the human condition, considered from a wealth of perspectives, disciplines and traditions](#). As we enter into our fourth year, all of us at the Humanities Center invite you to join with us in that exploration.

Brian R. Clack, PhD

A. Vassiliadis Director of the Humanities Center

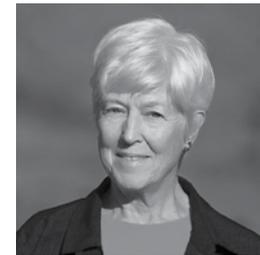


COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

The collaborative research element aims to initiate, convene and promote exceptional opportunities for student-faculty-community partnerships centered on relevant humanities issues. Activities range broadly from short-term learning occasions to more ambitious and longer-term projects.

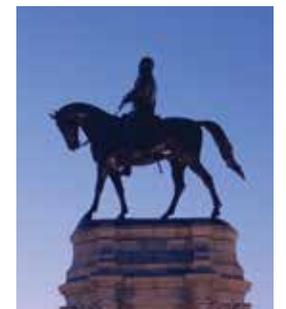
The 2018-19 academic year collaborative research grants and programs enhanced the vibrance of the Humanities Center. The Knapp Chair of Liberal Arts brings distinguished scholars to engage faculty members, students and the university community for a one- to three-week deep dive into their area of expertise. This year, we hosted Erika Doss, PhD, professor of American studies at the University of Notre Dame, who specializes in American art and public monuments; Melissa Farley, PhD, who is arguably the world's leading researcher on prostitution, sex trafficking and pornography, and founder of the Prostitution Research Center in San Francisco; and Linda Boland, PhD, the University of Richmond's authority on neuroscience, bioethics, and integrative and quantitative science. Each of the Knapp Chairs presented provocative ideas and led USD participants through reflective and applied learning, professional development and, in the case of Dr. Farley, an excursion to the U.S.-Mexico border to learn about the profound realities of global inequality, human trafficking and justice.

Our second cohort of Keck humanities fellows completed exciting projects on gender and the Salem Witch Trials, women and the history of philosophy, science on the theatrical stage, theology and the death penalty, Africa constructed through African American theater, Python regular expressions and 16th century playwrights, ethical



and legal dimensions of photorealistic videos and artificial neural networks, and a comparative study of Wittgenstein's philosophy of mind and the notion of "embodied cognition." The Keck humanities fellows attended monthly cohort meetings and presented in the Humanities Center their research experience and their final findings in two very well-received panels.

Keck Humanities Fellow Emma Dickson hosted a networking and exchange event for science and theater students. DeZell Lathon presented an exhibit of his research and design for an original play set in a throne room inspired by 14th century Malian Emperor Mansa Musa. Rebecca Lancaster's research on race, religion and the death penalty was enhanced by her participation in the Research Working Group for public exhibition scholar and Knapp Chair Dr. Erika Doss, and also from a Kress fellowship in collaboration with University Galleries. Rebecca's project culminated in a traveling walk-through exhibit that centered on the nuances of capital punishment. Several Keck humanities fellows have been admitted to graduate school





and will continue their development as researchers. Amber Sheldon will pursue her PhD in philosophy at Boston University, Sophie Abber will pursue her MS in psychology at Drexel University and DeZell Lathon will pursue his MFA in film studies at Loyola Marymount University.

The Faculty Interdisciplinary Startup (FIRSt) Grant supporting the Unfolding Humanity project resulted in an 11-foot-tall dodecahedron alluding to Durer's 500-year-old unsolved geometric problem and the intersections of mathematical theory, engineering realization and philosophical

DIGITAL HUMANITIES

Digital humanities is a highly collaborative field of scholarship and pedagogy that blends new technologies with rigorous humanities scholarship. Goals of the digital humanities element fall into three overlapping categories: faculty development, project development and pedagogy/curriculum development.

During the fall semester, the Humanities Center offered two events in the Digital Humanities (DH) Colloquium Series, "Who Wrote Shakespeare?" and Other Big Problems: Authorship Attribution for Everyone" and "Digital Participation in Class: Using Perusall and Google Docs to Include Quiet Students," in which student presenters played a major role.

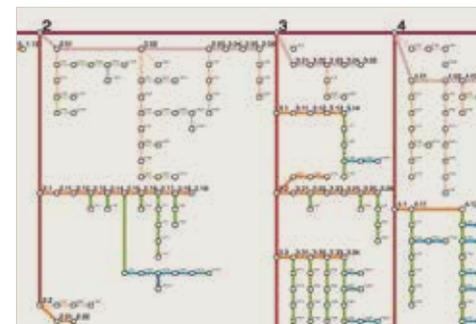
During the spring semester, the Humanities Center presented lectures by two very distinguished scholars from other institutions. David G. Stern from the University of Iowa presented "Introducing the Tractatus Map," highlighting a project from philosophy, a field usually underrepresented in

meditation. Unfolding Humanity received critical review in the *San Diego Union-Tribune* and *Forbes* magazine.

The Another California FIRSt Grant group (funded in 2017-18) published an article by Carlton D. Floyd and Thomas E. Reifer in 2018, "What Happened to a Dream Deferred? W.E.B. Du Bois and the Radical Black Enlightenment/Endarkenment" [*Socialism and Democracy* 32:3, pp. 52-80].



digital humanities, and the Humanities Center co-sponsored, in conjunction with the English department, the Joanne T. Dempsey Memorial Lecture in which N. Katherine Hayles of Duke University explored the question, "Can Computers Create Meaning?" Hayles' visit was also the occasion for the final DH Colloquium of the year, a panel discussion on "Learning from Cyborgs: Digital Technology and (Post) Humanism."





Much of the digital humanities project development during the 2018-19 academic year has taken the form of intensive one-on-one tutorial-style work with students. For his project, Jordan Matuszewski, one of our Keck undergraduate humanities research fellows, undertook development of Python programs using the regular expression library to transform input files for authorship attribution. Paige Ferguson transcribed Case 4 from the Barcelona and Admont manuscripts of Gratian's *Decretum* and encoded

her diplomatic transcriptions in TEI P5 XML. On the basis of Paige's work, and that of Emily Bolender last year, Anders Winroth, the leading scholar in the field and editor of the Mellon-funded critical edition of Gratian, has offered USD an important sub-project (the Pi recension). Workshops for instructors and their classes have also taken place in the digital humanities studio.

HUMANITIES CENTER GALLERY

The Humanities Center Gallery is one of six university galleries on our campus. This particular exhibition space is elegant and versatile and is nested within the busy center itself. In turn, our programming reflects the diverse, innovative research interests of the center, including special attention to digital humanities, interdisciplinary topics and creative engagements with the public humanities.

Throughout 2017-18, the Humanities Center Gallery presented four exhibitions. The academic year began with the second installation in our ongoing series of video projects, titled *Screenings*. In this presentation, Los Angeles-based artist Joan Perlman lent two recent works — *Dispersion* (2014) and *Thaw* (2018). Both projections feature glacial melt and running water, themes of extraordinary interest to the artist who has spent a large part of her career in Iceland. Issues of climate change and geologic time pervade Perlman's practice and were the subject of a talk that she gave in the center. In addition to her video practice, Perlman is a painter who lent a large, evocative drawing to the center during the course of *Screenings 2*.





The Printed Word: Textual Play in Contemporary Art opened in late October and featured a wide array of works — many of them recent acquisitions drawn from the permanent University Print Collection — all of which feature language as a key component. Some of these artists' works are deliberately poetic, while others tend toward political interpretation. For many visitors, this was a first opportunity to see major examples of the practice of Glenn Ligon, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Emory Douglas, Kay Rosen and others on campus. *The Printed Word* was co-curated by Bethany Martinez '19, another example of the Humanities Center's efforts to engage current students in projects of significance that benefit the entire campus community.

The spring semester began with *Ruskin at 200*, a beautifully staged presentation of more than a dozen works of art on paper inspired by the influential British critic, John Ruskin (1819-1900). A mini course taught by John Murphy (Hoehn Curatorial Fellow for Prints) and Jessica Patterson (chair, Department of Art, Architecture + Art History) coincided with *Ruskin at 200*, and students in the course used the space extensively. Scholars also took advantage of the presence of this display and the anniversary of Ruskin's birth to reconsider the Victorian thinker's place in debates of our own time, including ecological matters.

Finally, *Screenings 3: Joan Jonas* brought the 2018-2019 exhibition program in the Humanities Center to a sensational close. Jonas, a celebrated pioneer in new media (and video art in particular), was on campus in the spring as the recipient of the Kyoto Prize. Her work, *Double Lunar Dogs* (1984), was lent by the Museum of Contemporary Art to the Humanities Center for the end of the semester. This vivid, single-channel display is characteristic of Jonas' early career, which mixed borrowed narratives — in this case, a novella by the science



fiction writer Robert Heinlein — and an ensemble cast of actors including the artist herself and Spalding Gray. Numerous classes took advantage of the chance to study *Double Lunar Dogs*.

In addition to these four exhibitions, University Galleries co-sponsored six other programs in conjunction with the Humanities Center Gallery this academic year. These included gallery presentations by J. Noland (USD) and Anthony Graham (MCASD) and lectures by Joan Perلمان, Emma Stibbon (University of Bristol) and Stephen Eisenman (Northwestern). Joan Jonas also spoke to faculty members and students at Warren Auditorium, in dialogue with Kathryn Kanjo (MCASD), Victoria Fu (USD) and Derrick Cartwright (USD).



INTERDISCIPLINARY CURRICULUM

The interdisciplinary curriculum element is dedicated to the development of mechanisms encouraging and fostering novel cooperation involving the humanities and other disciplines/schools within the University of San Diego. The Humanities Center functions as an incubator in which interdisciplinary majors, minors, courses, team-taught classes and course clusters are envisaged, nurtured and brought to fruition.

During 2018-19, the interdisciplinary curriculum element of USD's Humanities Center continued to support several programs established during the first year of the Keck grant. The Interdisciplinary Majors and Minors committee, consisting of the directors of the college's interdisciplinary minors and majors that are not within departments, welcomed a new member, the director of the newly launched minor in philosophy, politics and economics. This committee continued its collaborative efforts to publicize and grow interdisciplinary academic programs on campus.

Our grant from the W. M. Keck Foundation helped to support a number of pop-up and seminar courses this year, including courses titled Aliveness, Consciousness, Presence: Seminar on Contemplative Inquiry; Gerrymandering: Race and Representation in American Politics; How Worried Should We Be About Democracy?; The Human Side of Medicine; John Ruskin and 19th Century Art; King Lear: Past, Present and Future; and Water Now and Then: Cape Town's Crisis, California, Modern Israel and the Biblical World. Already, we have proposals for new pop-up courses in 2019-20, and this program is becoming increasingly popular among students and faculty members.



We also launched a new program to provide interdisciplinary course enrichment funds that facilitate course enrichment and immersion experiences, enhancing active learning for students. In 2018-19, we awarded a grant to faculty members teaching an interdisciplinary advanced integration course titled Decolonizing Science, Faith and Environmental Justice. The funds were used to provide support for an experiential field trip to a Mexican Kumeyaay community, immersing the students and faculty members in a culture with different perspectives on environmental justice in relation to their faith system.



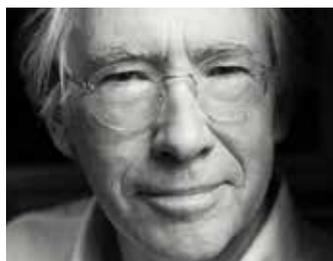
PUBLIC HUMANITIES

The Humanities Center provides opportunities for USD not only to organize and coordinate liberal arts initiatives and programs for our campus community, but also to establish partnerships with the broader San Diego community and beyond. In this manner, the center is engaged in the practice of what is known as public humanities — the intersection of civic engagement and the study of the human condition — and manifests its commitment to ensuring the accessibility of the humanities to our wider community.

Since its inception in 2016, the work of the Humanities Center has had a profoundly outward facing and public dimension, and in 2018-19 our vibrant public humanities initiatives continued our engagement with the broader San Diego community. We highlight here three significant accomplishments: the Illume Speaker Series; the completion of the Beauty, Goodness and Truth series; and our collaborations with Human Resources to provide unprecedented opportunities for university employees to explore the human condition.

The Illume series consists of two streams: talks by visiting speakers and authors (often undertaken in partnership with Warwick's Books of La Jolla); and — through the College Lecture Series — a showcase of the remarkable research undertaken by faculty members from USD's College of Arts and Sciences, presented in terms accessible to a nonspecialist audience.

This year, we staged lectures by some of the nation's most influential commentators on the nature of education, such as William Deresiewicz and Elizabeth Minnich, and some of world's



greatest writers and thought leaders, including Chelsea Clinton, Major Garrett, Marlon James, Ian McEwan, Admiral William McRaven, Patton Oswalt and Scott Pelley.

The Beauty, Goodness and Truth series began in the spring of 2018 and reached its conclusion three semesters later, in April 2019. Each semester's series explored the complex and multifaceted nature of each of those concepts that inspired the foundation of USD at its inception. Taking the form of weekly panel discussions, sessions consisted of animated and provocative discussions featuring college faculty members from the arts, humanities and sciences.

Keen to expand access to the humanities to all members of our university community, the Humanities Center, in a highly original collaboration with USD's Human Resources, has developed



a program of seminars for university staff and employees called "The Examined Life." the first variation of this seminar is designed to help employees think about the significance of their lives, and this year was undertaken via close engagement with Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*; the second has been designed specifically for those coming up to retirement, and addresses — via

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS

***There's More* podcast is a campus storytelling initiative that is supported through collaboration between the Humanities Center, the College of Arts and Sciences and the Changemaker Hub. *There's More* collects diverse stories about how USD community members pursue a purpose-filled life by confronting humanity's urgent challenges.**

The series highlights USD's liberal arts tradition by exploring the human condition through the practice of changemaking. This year, there were four student producers leading this initiative: Daryan Gomez, Amulya Maddali, Noah Pallmeyer and Lily Yates; one student intern, Jayla Martinez, and two faculty producers, Diane Keeling and Jonathan Bowman of communication studies.

In the 2018-19 year, this team launched a student-produced podcast online at theresmore.sandiego.edu, also available on iTunes. There are four podcast storytelling genres: *More Human* collects stories about impactful moments in the lives of USD community members, *More Insight* collects creative works from artists in the USD and San Diego communities, *More Change* collects stories about USD's history and changemaking practices and *More Dialogue* collects meaningful conversations about the USD community. Content for the *There's More* podcast is created, in part, by USD communication studies majors and changemaking minors enrolled in COMM 494 –

classical texts such as Cicero's *How to Grow Old* — the problems and opportunities of aging. Further iterations of "The Examined Life" are in development as the Humanities Center seeks to extend the enjoyment of the arts and humanities to other constituencies both on and off campus.



Podcast Storytelling. *There's More* student producers evaluate the quality of content from this class and select works to publish online.

This year, we also launched a monthly live-storytelling event at the Humanities Center, and these events garnered strong attendance from the campus community. There are approximately five storytellers at each event, with a spoken-word poet from the San Diego community to close. Each month's stories are organized around a different story theme. Storytellers interpret the themes playfully and relay real stories from their lives. Monthly themes this year were First, Out, Roast, Present, Heart, Culture and Folklore, Faith and The End. Storytellers include students, faculty members, staff and administrators of the USD community. Stories are recorded and published on our website as part of our *More Human* series.