



Humanities Fellowship Proposals— Soup to Nuts

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About Me / About Humanities Research Development

Sarah Workman is Assistant Director for Research Development (Humanities), a position split between the [College of Arts & Sciences](#) and the [Office of Research](#) in order to elevate research achievement and recognition for campus-wide humanities scholarship. From my two homes on campus, I provide support for research development at any stage of the process, including helping humanities faculty identify funding sources, assisting with grant and proposal writing, and coordinating nominations for honorary awards.

[Humanities Research Development](#)

Why Apply?

- Enhances research & scholarship
- Broadens your networks, builds connections
- Contributes to your tenure & promotion portfolio
- Helps define ideas for your books & articles
- Provides opportunities for mentoring and collaboration
- Successful awards pave the way for other opportunities

Session Overview

- Step 1: Identify Opportunities
- Step 2: Develop Your Plan
- Step 3: Develop Your Materials
- Step 4: Get Feedback & Revise
- Step 5: Submit and Repurpose
- Additional Resources



Before you look. . .

- What do you want to do?
- What do you need?
- Are you geographically mobile?
- How long do you want to be away?
- What is your ideal timing for your fellowship?
- Do you have an upcoming leave?

Resources for Identifying Humanities Fellowships

External Fellowships

- Office of Research [Curated Funding Lists](#)
- [PIVOT](#): an easy-to-use key-word-searchable database for finding current funding opportunities specifically tailored to research needs
 - [OoR Presentation & Training](#): PIVOT
- Biannual email from srworkma@syr.edu
- KU The Hall Center for Humanities [lists](#)
- Professional listservs/networks
- Colleagues/mentors

Internal Fellowships

- SU Humanities Center: [On-campus fellowships](#)



Step 2: Develop Your Plan

Logistics

- Give your chair a heads-up
- Reach out to the Research Administrator assigned to your school or college to give them a heads-up
- Read the Request for Proposals (RFP)
- Review the requirements and additional documentation
- Reach out to recommenders, if applicable
- Create a timeline - work backwards from the deadline

Gather Additional Intel

- Read sample applications, if available
- Review list of previous awardees and consult project descriptions, if available
- Refer to [NEH Fellowship Sample Application](#) Narratives



Step 3: Develop Your Materials

Prompt #1: Part 1 - Project Description (~5 min)

b. "Project Description."

Describe your project for a nonspecialist audience, stating the importance of the proposed work to the humanities. This description will appear on your application cover sheet and will serve as a project abstract during the review process. Do not exceed one thousand characters, including spaces. If you exceed one thousand characters, including spaces, Grants.gov may reject your application or cut off your project description at the thousand-character limit.

Prompt #1: Part 2 - Project Description (~5 min)

Consider your project description. Who is your audience?

Audience

- Write to humanities generalists AND colleagues in your field
 - Usually, you will not be appealing to those in your subdiscipline
 - “colleague down the hall; colleague across campus”
- Pedagogically, write to your smart, advanced undergraduates

Writing Strategies

- The Proposal as Genre
- Write with confidence: You are the recipient
- No jargon
- Appeal to funding body; match the RFP *and* the funding institution's goals

Structure

- Borrow language from the RFP if these are not required by the funder or adapt sections from NEH Fellowship (see [Notice of Funding Opportunities](#) or NOFO)
 - Use the following as a guide:
 - Significance and contribution
 - Organization, concepts, and methods
 - Work plan
 - Competencies, skills, and access
 - Final product and dissemination

Prompt #2: Proposal Summaries Handout (~5 min)

- Consider changes in terms of project significance, methods, workplan, scholarly background, etc. What stands out to you as you compare?

10-22-21 HUMANITIES FUNDING PROPOSALS—SOUP TO NUTS

SAMPLE PROPOSAL SUMMARY

Chris Forster, "Statistical Foundations for Computational Literary Study" Mellon New Directions (2019)

DRAFT: I will use the Mellon New Directions Fellowship opportunity to shift the focus of my research towards computationally enabled literary history by developing both a solid grounding in relevant statistical methods for computationally driven textual analysis and applicable skills in computer programming. The field of computationally driven literary interpretation has emerged over the past decade. In an earlier moment called "humanities computing," such work has sometimes been discussed as part of the wider category of "digital humanities," as well as under the narrower rubrics of "distant reading" and "computational literary studies." While I have spent time working in this area, it has become very clear to me that without a firmer, formal grounding in relevant statistical methods, it is very difficult to pursue this work. It seems, indeed, impossible to take full advantage of the opportunities afforded by new large text datasets without additional training. Resources like HathiTrust enable literature scholars to pursue research questions across wider periods of literary history, with far greater numbers of texts. The sort of methods I am interested in pursuing are mostly basic measures of statistical similarity. Although these are not cutting-edge methods from the perspective of a statistician, they are utterly foreign to literary study. While it is common for graduate training in the social sciences to include at least some quantitative skills, such training has never been typical in the humanities and remains almost entirely absent. The rapidly developing availability of textual resources, makes a basic grounding in quantitative methods newly vital to the humanities in general and to literary studies (grounded, after all, in the study of *text*) in particular. With this training I will be able to help reshape the field of literary studies as these developments continue to make new methods and new sets of texts available for interpretation.

FINAL: Using computers to bring quantitative text analysis to literary studies has reached a point of maturity. Once labeled "humanities computing," this trend has emerged over the last decade, sometimes as part of the wider category of "digital humanities," or under the narrower rubrics of "distant reading" and "computational literary studies." Taking advantage of newly available large-scale text databases, such approaches use statistics to inaugurate a radical shift in literary studies, a shift to a study of literature that is both broader (because no longer bound by the canons of conventional literary study) and more empirical (because grounded in quantitative analysis). Is such an "empirical" or "quantitative" literary studies possible without sacrificing what is unique to the field? What would be its benefits? I take this question to be a genuine and pressing one, which can only be answered by literary critics and literary historians who have mastered (or at the very least understood) these new tools and methods. While the true value of these methods remains uncertain, I am convinced that understanding and evaluating their potential is a vital concern for contemporary literary studies. I will use the Mellon New Directions Fellowship to equip myself for such research in two ways: first, and primarily, I will establish a solid grounding in relevant statistical methods for computationally assisted textual analysis; second, I will solidify and extend my existing skills in computer programming to better use these methods. The New Directions Fellowship offers a unique, and ideally timed, opportunity to master these methods that by turns promise and threaten to reshape the study of literature and culture.

“So What?” / Why Should We Care?

- It is not enough to do something new; the fact that nobody has studied the thing isn't enough to convince people that the thing should be studied
- What does your work *do*. . . to the field/adjacent fields? The humanities? the local community? The broader community (however you chose to define it)? Methodologically?

What to Avoid

- The weeds
- The fishbowl
- The underseller



Step 4: Get Feedback & Revise

Readers

- Aim for a reader within your discipline and a general humanities reader
- Give yourself time to incorporate feedback!



Step 5: Submit & Repurpose

A row of nine light-colored wooden blocks, each with a black letter, spelling out the word "RESOURCES". The blocks are arranged horizontally on a wooden surface. The letters are R, E, S, O, U, R, C, E, S. The lighting is soft, and the background is a blurred wooden surface.

RESOURCES

Additional Resources

Recommended Reading/Viewing

- [Writing Proposals for ACLS Competitions](#), by Christina M. Gillis, former program officer at ACLS, where she was responsible for the fellowship programs, and Associate Director of the Townsend Center for the Humanities at the University of California, Berkeley
- [NEH Summer Stipend Application Writing Tips](#) (Webinar)
- Sample applications

Additional School or College-level Research Support

- Jill Ferguson (jsfergus@maxwell.syr.edu), Director of Research Development, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs
- Kristen Northrop (kmnorthr@syr.edu), Assistant Director, Research and Creative Activity, Newhouse School of Public Communications
- Meghan Macblane (mtmacbla@syr.edu), Director of Grant Development, School of Information Studies
- Amy Dumas (adumas@syr.edu), Director, Falk Research Center
- **Undergraduates** can reach out to Center for Fellowship and Scholarship Advising (CFSA)
 - Assistant Director, Melissa Welshans (mlwelsha@syr.edu)
- **Graduate students** can reach out to Dan Olson-Bang, Director, Professional and Career Development (dolsonba@syr.edu)

Institutional Partners

- Office of Corporate & Foundation Relations – Gary Girzadas (gsgirzad@syr.edu), Executive Director; Nora Heaphy (nheaphy@syr.edu) Director, Foundation Relations
- SU Libraries – Emily Hart (ekhart@syr.edu), Science Librarian, Research Impact Lead
- Office of Sponsored Programs (unit of the Office of Research) - Research administrators from OSP are assigned to individual schools and colleges



Q & A

Post-Session Survey

Thank you for your feedback!



Contact Me

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