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If you had a chance to listen to the news or scan the paper this morning, you know the British concluded their national election in a somewhat inconclusive way (and not because some chads were left hanging). Elections in the UK are always interesting, if only because they start and finish within a few weeks, while American presidential elections drag out over 18 long and expensive months. But this recent British campaign did include the introduction of American-style debates among the three party leaders. If you were able to see any of those encounters, which were broadcast on C-SPAN, you heard, even from the incumbent Labour Party, long recitations of the many problems confronting the country, from mere incivility to possible national insolvency. The tableau brought to mind the eighteenth-century dramatist Arthur Murray, who famously wrote that “the people of England are never so happy as when you tell them they are ruined.” Evidently, then, there is much to be happy about in the scepter’d isle.

It sometimes seems that we in the humanities share that particular British satisfaction in narratives of our own decline. There’s no doubt that the effects of the Great Recession have accelerated the sense of threat from malign forces and despair over the future. I won’t pull a Sarah Palin on you and blame the “lamestream media,” but you may have seen the recent cover of the *Review of the Chronicle of Higher Education* asking, “Is Graduate Education in the Humanities Broken?” with any number of contributors telling us how. And a panel at the annual meeting of the Education Writers Association next week is entitled “The Future of the Humanities in Higher Education: Beginning of the End?”

Well, reports of our death are greatly exaggerated. At the American Council of Learned Societies, we do not see signs of rigor mortis in the humanities, but rather of intellectual vigor and scholarly accomplishment aplenty, as you will hear from the panel of recent ACLS fellows that will follow my report. Now, there are certainly serious problems that we in the humanities must wrestle with, but

crisis-mongering is no substitute for effective action. Better, perhaps, to follow the simple advice given by a poster the British government distributed at the outbreak of World War II. It had only five words underneath a heraldic crown: “Keep Calm and Carry On.”

But at the same time, “keep calm” should not mean retreat to a comfortable complacency or a reflexive refusal to consider change or to acknowledge the possibility that long-term perturbations in the economic climate cannot but have an effect on the health of the humanities within higher education and research. I will say more about that before concluding, but first let me discharge my responsibility of giving you a report on ACLS.

As you already have heard this morning, ACLS is far from being ruined. We are, to be sure, aware that the fund balance of our own endowment is still below its pre-meltdown peak, but our support of scholarship and research is at a new high—\$15 million in stipends and grants awarded worldwide—thanks to the contributions of foundations, generous individuals, and colleges and universities.

“The secret of success is constancy of purpose,” said Benjamin Disraeli. Our purpose—the first and final reason that ACLS and, indeed, our member societies exist—is to provide to the scholarly community of the humanities and related social sciences the means of setting their own intellectual direction. Our fellowship competitions, international programs, and exploration of new developments in scholarly communication not only share this aim but could not operate without the very real and active contributions of colleagues and partners who serve as reviewers, advisers, and, in many cases, co-designers of our initiatives. Many of you are here today.

We had a valuable opportunity to reflect on our work in September, when we hosted a meeting of the heads of other national organizations granting fellowships in the humanities and interpretive social sciences. Represented at the gathering were the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, the National Humanities Center, the Institute for Advanced Study, the Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers of the New York Public Library, and the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study. We expect that future meetings will include leaders of institutions that were unable to attend, such as the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, and the American Philosophical Society.

Among the first points noted was that research fellowships represent a demonstrably efficient means of advancing scholarship in the humanities. Precisely because the fellowship mechanism is so familiar in our fields, it is worth emphasizing what a distinctive form of research funding it is. Much research organization in other fields requires large teams and expensive, extensive infrastructure. In other domains, the allocation of research monies is often driven by the funder’s specification of the question to be addressed. In national

humanities fellowships competitions, by contrast, the intellectual initiative of the individual is the most critical ingredient of a proposal. Such individual work and achievement is too often undervalued in our society, even though this approach to research support is profoundly democratic.

Nicole Stahlmann's report this morning gave you some idea of the scope and scale of ACLS's fellowship programs this year. A great deal of scholarly energy and expertise is mobilized across our competitions—mobilized for review, but also mobilized to apply. Nicole noted the increase in the volume of applications we received this year. Our sister fellowship-granting organizations reported similar increases in demand. In our endowment-funded central program, we received 20 applications for every award available. In 1997, before ACLS began the reinvigoration of our fellowship program, the ratio of applications to awards was 9-to-1.

To what can we ascribe this change? Certainly, the higher stipends our fellowships now carry make them more attractive, and the increased visibility and accessibility of our competitions—thanks to our outreach efforts and investment in our online application system—are also significant. Less happily, we suspect that many faculty are confronting reductions in support for research at their home institutions, or at least the requirement that obtaining research leave requires an effort to secure outside funding.

But we cannot lose sight of—indeed, we should underscore and celebrate—the underlying fact that the humanities professoriate is dedicated to research and ambitious to accomplish it. It is in one sense reassuring that our fellowship competitions are rigorous and that our selection committees find choices difficult. That is what produces the intellectual snap, crackle, and pop we hear when our review panels meet in our conference rooms. But the yawning gap between the funding available—at ACLS and across the entire set of fellowship-granting organizations—and the number of meritorious applications means that we have hobbled our national capacity for increasing knowledge and curricular innovation.

The enormous and urgent demand we are experiencing means we must redouble our efforts to increase the number and amount of fellowships we can offer each year. The Great Recession has retarded our ambitious plans, but it will certainly not abrogate them. I am delighted to be able to report that of the 32 research universities that provided special support for the ACLS fellowship program over the past 10 years, 29 have renewed their commitments into the coming decade. (The other three universities have our invitation to renew before them.) This consortium has, collectively, provided more than \$1.5 million per year to the ACLS fellowship endowment. These high-minded institutions recognize that ACLS is their partner in the difficult business of recognizing excellence in research and that national metrics of excellence benefit the entire system of higher education, a system of which they are such a prominent component.

The endowment of our central fellowship program ensures that it will be a permanent piece of our national infrastructure for supporting research. The New Faculty Fellows program about which Nicole spoke this morning is explicitly a temporary measure, designed to address the radical and rapid constriction of the academic job market in the face of the recession. The program also models a form of postdoctoral/pre-tenure-track appointment that allows for both the professional development of young scholars and the strengthening of the teaching capacity of the departments receiving them. The breathtaking success of the program's placement process again underlines how a trusted peer review process creates value. As Nicole mentioned, every one of the program's awardees received at least one appointment offer from a participating college or university. Many received multiple offers—one awardee received 15—and about 300 were made in total. To be sure, the New Faculty Fellows were attractive to colleges and universities in part because the cost of their appointment would be subsidized by their award. But these are not free appointments: colleges and universities are sharing in the cost of stipends and health insurance. It is not surprising that the competition to *appoint* fellows was as vigorous as the competition to *become* one. Indeed, the two processes are linked; the assurance of quality provided by ACLS's stringent peer review was itself a market stimulant.

This program is also a clear example of the purpose I mentioned a moment ago: ACLS helping to provide the means for the humanities community to discover and manage its own necessary innovation. The idea for what eventually became the New Faculty Fellows program emerged from a meeting of the representatives of our research university consortium in February 2009. Assembled deans, center directors, and others noted that a cohort was at risk. Many deserve the credit for moving this initiative so rapidly from a general idea to a well-implemented program involving more than 100 institutions and nearly 900 applicants. The diligence and imagination of our fellowship staff have been remarkable elements of this effort's success. But Nicole would be the first to point out how essential was the active participation of college and university leaders at all stages of mapping and mounting the program. Many of the college and university liaisons to this program are here with us today, and we want to thank them for their help and collegueship. And finally, but conclusively, we must thank The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation—but, as always, not for money alone. No less important than the funding it provided was the supportive partnership and wise guidance of senior vice president Harriet Zuckerman and program officer Joe Meisel in this endeavor.

As many of you know, Harriet is retiring from her post at the foundation, with much of her responsibility to be assumed in July by Mariët Westermann, now the provost of New York University's Abu Dhabi campus. I can't begin to express how much I have benefited from the opportunity to work with Harriet. The many of you in this room who have also had that pleasure know well how her keen analysis, deep experience, and unswerving commitment to the values of

scholarship have shaped a philanthropic program that is a critical national resource. I know you join me in wishing her success and satisfaction in the next stage of her prodigiously effective career, as a senior fellow of the foundation.

A much sadder passage was the death in March this year of Charles Ryskamp, for whom ACLS and the Mellon Foundation have named our program of fellowships for advanced assistant professors. One can envy the future researcher who writes the history of the Mellon Foundation. The subject is deeply consequential, and the personalities vivid. But it's hard to imagine one more so than Charles Ryskamp, who apart from his many other accomplishments, helped guide the foundation into the leadership role it has today. For the past eight years, Charles hosted an annual dinner for the incoming class of Ryskamp fellows. These events have been occasions for genuine fellowship, during which the young scholars viewed Charles's singular collection of drawings, prints, and paintings and came to appreciate his example of scholarly dedication and enthusiastic connoisseurship. We will continue them in other venues, but with a keen sense of loss.

Our current set of international programs covers five regions: Africa, Eastern Europe, the Slavic republics of the former USSR, and East and Southeast Asia. The priorities of funders have played a large role in determining that geography, but the principles of ACLS have determined their form. Open, peer-reviewed competitions seek to identify and support excellent scholarship. The process of peer review helps catalyze trans-institutional and international scholarly networks, at least one of which has become an independent learned society: the International Association for the Humanities incorporated in Ukraine and reaching into Russia and Belarus. Our director of international programs, Andrzej W. Tymowski, has had the vision to develop strong plans of action that embody these values; he has worked tirelessly and traveled continuously to promote these means of scholarly self-governance in areas where (on a very different model) direction from above has customarily shaped academic life.

Only a half generation ago, a conversation mentioning Google, Yahoo, YouTube, Twitter, blogs, wikis, and tweets would have sounded like baby talk, but that vocabulary is now necessary to read the business page—and the strategic plans of almost any nonprofit organization. Communication builds community, including the communities of knowledge our societies represent. When, fifty years ago, ACLS issued its first study of computers in the humanities, digital technologies were the exclusive property of universities, mega-corporations, and the military. Today these are also social technologies, shaping scholarly communication and the academic environment as surely as the economy does.

In 1999, Eileen Gardiner and Ron Musto began the ACLS History E-Book project, now Humanities E-Book, as an experiment. In partnership with five learned societies and ten university presses, they sought to develop a digital collection of selected scholarly books that would be so attractive to libraries that their

subscriptions could sustain the project as a site for further collaboration among societies, libraries, and publishers. In the years since, many, many digital projects, launched to great fanfare and often at great cost, have fallen out of cyberspace, but Ron and Eileen's clean design and careful management have brought their project into its second decade. Subscribers to Humanities E-Book now can access and cross-search more than 2,800 titles containing more than 1 million pages and 80,000 images. Individual members of ACLS constituent societies can subscribe to the collection directly, an opportunity especially valuable to independent scholars and faculty whose institutional libraries do not license large digital databases. Tracking the use of the Humanities E-Book collection also provides interesting insight into trends in teaching and research. While for most of the past decade, works on Islam and the Middle East were the most accessed titles in the collection, Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* now leads the top-ten hit list, a roster of works in world history that is truly global in its reach.

Let me now offer a few comments on the challenges to our institutions posed by changes in the economic climate. First, some historical context. Forty-two years ago, in an eventful 1968, sociologists Christopher Jencks and David Riesman authored *The Academic Revolution*. It is stirring and startling to recall what they wrote about graduate education:

Despite the relative clarity with which they perceive their purposes and define their programs—a clarity that is almost certainly illusory—the academic graduate schools are the primary force for growth within the modern university. Their enrollments have been rising at a fantastic rate, in comparison to both the population and undergraduate enrollment. Their status is also rising. Both in their own minds and in the minds of other professional schools, they occupy a position somewhat comparable to that of theology in the medieval university. Other professional schools justify themselves (and their budgets) in terms of external problems and needs. The graduate academic departments are for the most part autotelic. They resent even being asked whether they produce significant benefits to society beyond the edification of their own members, and mark down the questioner as an anti-intellectual. To suggest that the advancement of a particular academic discipline is not synonymous with the advancement of the human condition is regarded as myopic. Perhaps, considering the affluence of American taxpayers and the relatively ample supply of talented, well-educated college graduates, it really is.

Ah, yes! The affluent American taxpayer, prepared to support higher education, to finance graduate education no questions asked. Where is he now? Professors Jencks and Riesman must have glimpsed this fabled actor in one of his final appearances on the political stage.

A much different drama, in a very different context, unfolds today, one in which most public expenditures are presumed wasteful until proven useful, and the budget process consists almost entirely of zero-sum choices. California, where the governor has proposed measuring support for higher education against the total cost of the correctional system, is the acme, or perhaps the nadir, of this dynamic. As I've recounted before, the University of California system's vice provost for academic affairs described this as a situation where "we are heading toward a cliff; we are accelerating; and we have no brakes." Sounds like *Thelma & Louise*! An article published earlier this spring in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* by Rob Watson, a professor of English at UCLA, documents both the internal struggle of the University of California and one of the terms of the debate: which part of the university represents "profit," and who is responsible for loss?

Another UC faculty member, Berkeley historian David Hollinger, the current president of the Organization of American Historians, has framed the debate somewhat differently. "In the specific tax environment that now exists in California," he writes, "does our historic standing as a public university remain compatible with our equally historic standing as a campus of intellectual distinction? It is irresponsible for us as a faculty to continue to avoid this deeply unwelcome question, and to deny collegial support to those of our administrators who are trying to confront it." Because "institutions and practices are historically contingent," Hollinger argues that the UC system, and Berkeley in particular, can no longer be both "good" and "public"—that is, a low-tuition institution accessible to almost all strata of society. If that is the choice, Hollinger prefers to be "good," even if it means turning away from Clark Kerr's master plan for education in California, which was posited in 1960 "during a period of prosperity and diminishing class inequalities" that now seems a long time ago and far, far away.

As David Hollinger well knows, he is proposing a major rethinking of one of the most notable designs of public higher education in American history. He is taking seriously the scale of the problem. But the problem is not a catastrophe. As former Columbia provost Jonathan Cole argues in his new book, the American research university is still the envy of the world and likely to be so for some time to come. Indeed, when we take the global view, we see an institutional convergence toward the American model of combining research and teaching, and of embracing general, professional, and specialist education. Prominent Chinese universities, for example, are seeking to develop a version of the liberal arts college based on the American model as a means of improving undergraduate education.

But even if higher education is not ruined, we cannot be complacent, let alone happy. In an article in the winter 2009 issue of *Daedalus*, Harriet Zuckerman and Ronald Ehrenberg have provided an empirically grounded, powerfully

understated analysis of meaningful measures of the health of the academic humanities within the context of U.S. higher education. After looking at data concerning salaries, enrollment, employment, and library and publishing expenditures, they conclude that there is “some cause for optimism, some for pessimism, and much that leads to uneasiness” about the relative standings of our fields. That their data were drawn from a moment before the effects of the recession were felt only heightens the disquietude. As they dryly note, “[T]he major financial problems the nation is confronting have already begun to affect institutions of higher education adversely”.

Understanding and measuring the relative position of the humanities is important, but even more salient is Harriet and Ron’s clarification of the determinants of those measures. “One thing is clear,” they write, “the support the academic humanities can now call upon is the product of a great many forces operating outside the academy and within it”. Those forces include the shrinking resource base of public colleges and universities, the “federal government’s retreat from supporting a substantial share of academic science” just as universities were making major investments in that domain, an understandable priority given to increasing access to college, and the fact that “the humanities have failed to find many eager patrons outside the academy”.

None of these forces will be quickly reversed, and they are likely to set the conditions for the academic humanities for some time. Our colleague Earl Lewis, provost at Emory University, noted to his fellow members of the ACLS Board that coping with these conditions will require “a deep level of self-examination and reflection.” Let us do so with constancy of purpose. If we are to demand self-governance, we must enact self-governance by engaging in that self-examination so as to help make the serious choices confronting our colleges and universities. Several of our societies are well advanced in this process. ACLS should and will do more to present their reflections to the academic public.

But as we carry on under the current conditions, we should also reflect on how we can better present the value proposition that we know is inherent in the humanities but that is not understood or appreciated by our potential public patrons—and by public I mean much more than the federal government. In particular, we need to explode the widespread impression, shared within and without the academy, that the academic humanities are just a bunch of smart people being clever on paper. The humanities are research enterprises, in which new knowledge and better understanding is created from diligent searching, discovery, interpretation, and analysis. The new knowledge and understanding yielded by our research renews the whole fund of human knowledge. Without the renewal the humanities provide, that fund of knowledge will deteriorate and soon be—how can I put it?—sub-prime. It’s not difficult to make the case for the importance of the humanities in fulfilling the *teaching* mission of the university, but too many people stop there. I would be very grateful to have your thoughts,

today or at any time, on how we can make more visible the equally crucial *research* dimension of the humanities.

Let me conclude with one more reference from Great Britain, this time from Winston Churchill. Interestingly, while Churchill is the most quoted Briton, the most quoted American is probably Yogi Berra. To both men are attributed oft-cited comments about what is yet to come. Yogi Berra, of course, is said to have observed that “prediction is very hard, especially about the future.” Churchill appears to have been undaunted by this challenge, and, ever the unreconstructed imperialist, predicted that “the empire of the future will be the empire of the mind.” But it was the British Commonwealth, of course, that succeeded the British Empire. And what of our commonwealth of the mind? I think we can fairly assert that if it lacks the knowledge gained by research in the humanities, it will be a deeply impoverished one. It is our task to make sure that is not the case.

Thank you.