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An Investment in Value: Support for Research in the Humanities

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I am delighted and honored to be speaking at the Academia Sinica today, during the year that marks the eightieth anniversary of the academy's founding. It is a special pleasure to visit an institution that meant a great deal to my late father, Dr. Paul Yu—Yu Nangeng. As some of you may know, he was extremely proud to have been elected a member of the Academia Sinica while at the University of Rochester, and he dedicated the last years of his life to establishing the Institute of Biomedical Sciences here. My family was extremely grateful that the institute, where my father's good friend Professor C. Y. Chai still works, offered him a professional home after his retirement and move to Taiwan in 1989.

My assignment today is to discuss the American system of support for research in the humanities and related social sciences, with special emphasis on the role of my own organization, the American Council of Learned Societies. ACLS is a federation of 69 learned societies whose memberships range from just under 500 to well over 150,000. Its mission is to advance humanistic studies in all fields of the humanities and social sciences and to strengthen relations among

national organizations dedicated to those studies. Advancing humanistic studies is something we do principally through a wide range of fellowship programs, as well as through strategic initiatives addressing key issues in such topics as international studies and scholarly communication. Founded in 1919, ACLS is a few years older than the Academia Sinica. More important is our common cause: supporting research and the advancement of knowledge. Indeed, the ties between ACLS and the Academia Sinica go back for several decades. At our 1944 annual meeting, Dr. Hu Shih, then a research associate at ACLS, presented the greetings of the AS, and the Council thereupon passed the following resolution:

To extend to the Academia Sinica the greetings of the American Council of Learned Societies, to express the sincere desire of the Council to collaborate in all possible ways with the Academia Sinica, and to assure the latter of the Council's grateful appreciation to the Academia Sinica for its appointment of Dr. Hu Shih as its delegate in the United States as a means of maintaining relations with the Council.¹

Not until 1966, however, when a joint committee of our two organizations was established to support research in Taiwan, was this hope for collaboration realized. It carried out its work until 1981 and was reestablished in 1989 to promote collaboration on research and teaching until 1996, when such special efforts were deemed no longer necessary because relations had become "routine and normal."²

One of the more interesting responsibilities I have as president of ACLS is serving as a member of the investment committee, which oversees the professional managers of our assets of nearly \$100 million. Fortunately, the pleasure I derive from this service does not depend on receiving only positive reports about the returns on our investments. I am fairly certain that when our committee reviews our investment performance for the first quarter of 2008, the news will not be good. Global capital markets are in turmoil, thanks in large part to the consequences of the subprime mortgage crisis originating in the United States.

But even if our financial results are discouraging, there's an intellectual challenge to our investment committee work that I find enjoyable. The conceptual framework of sophisticated money

¹ American Council of Learned Societies. Resolution. *Bulletin* 36 (Dec. 1944): 103. Print.

² American Council of Learned Societies. *Annual Report, 1995-1996*. 35. Print.

managers and their particular vocabulary are not quite the same as those in classical Chinese studies. As someone used to “writing up” the results of library research, I had to learn that investment firms “write down” their losses. Two of the more fundamental terms I had to understand were the deceptively simple words *growth* and *value*. As many of you may know, these represent two styles of equity investments, each with a different object. Growth investors seek out firms that have the potential to increase their earnings and market share in the future. It is believed that as these companies grow, the value of their stock will rise, and early investors will reap the rewards. Start-ups marketing innovative products or services—information technology firms are a prime example—are frequently targeted for this type of investment strategy, and their stock prices can seem high relative to their actual worth.

Value investors, on the other hand, buy the stock of firms whose present market valuations are measurably low given their current earnings, operations, and management. Classic value investments are well-established companies whose very familiarity may lead to their being taken for granted. These are the firms that, as the saying goes, would have to be invented if they did not exist.

Investments in humanities research and education are like value investments in several ways. The humanities are undervalued and taken for granted. They are an essential element of our academic and cultural infrastructure, just as utilities, transportation companies, and banks are essential elements of our economic infrastructure. They organize knowledge in dictionaries and encyclopedias; they create new knowledge through research, writing, and teaching. The humanities help us understand the cultural heritage that has shaped our civilizations as well as what will make life meaningful and coherent tomorrow. Without the knowledge provided by the humanities, we would not be able to understand where we have come from, where we are, or where we are going. The humanities, that is, help us understand and realize our own system of values, the values with which we navigate the confusion we call life.

How does the United States invest in the value of the humanities? The short answer is simple: insufficiently. I will try to provide a longer and more nuanced answer in three steps. First, I want to identify some distinctive dynamics of the structure of American higher education and note how these dynamics have historically determined how and by whom resources are allocated among institutions and among fields of scholarly endeavor. Second, I will report what data we have on the scale and scope of support of the academic humanities in the United States. Finally, I

want to be very specific about how ACLS seeks to deploy the resources earned from our investments and granted to us by our donors to advance humanistic scholarship.

Comparative higher education is a lively topic these days, with the “convergence” of national structures and policies linked to processes of globalization. This convergence is not by any means accidental or spontaneous. Indeed, in its 2000 report, *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise*, the World Bank-UNESCO Task Force on Higher Education and Society prescribed for the developing world the outline of an effective national university system that encapsulates some of the most salient features of higher education in America. The World Bank identified the following dynamics of an effective system:

- That it be a mixed system in which both public and private universities are financed by both public and private sources
- That it be a stratified system in which the component universities have different purposes and, as a consequence, different levels of prestige
- That universities have a culture and structure of shared governance in which the public authorities, the professoriate, and the university’s leaders and managers all have a role but none is all-powerful
- That it be a system open to market influences so that competition for students, faculty, outside support, and prestige can engender an upward spiral of improvement and development³

This very quick summary does not do justice to the balanced and clear presentation of this thoughtful report, which emphasizes that the humanities and the liberal arts must be a central component of higher education. But I wanted to list these criteria quickly not only because the report has become something of a charter for the World Bank’s subsequent support for higher education but also because the specified qualities describe the American university and—to greater or lesser degrees—the university systems of other developed nations. This mirroring is not, of course, a coincidence, and it underlines our obligation to reflect on the trajectory of the Western university, now the world model.

³ Task Force on Higher Education and Society. *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise*. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2000. Web. 10 June 2008.

The American research university emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries without significant participation of the nation-state. With the exception of the Morrill Act of 1862, which distributed revenues to create land-grant universities in many states, the single most important factor in the evolution of American higher education was, perhaps, the absence of the federal government's involvement in it. Until after World War II for the sciences, and until 1965 for the humanities, most research support came from private or internal sources: from individual philanthropists, from foundations, or from a university's own budget. But that is not to say that the university system as a whole could be described as privatized. Even if the source of foundation endowments was private donations, both public and private universities—those founded by state legislatures and those created by wealthy individuals, civic elites, or religious denominations—competed on equal footing for foundation support.

That very competition is another defining aspect of the American academic system. In the absence of any national governing authority defining or limiting the ambition of local institutions, each aspiring university could seek to improve its status and attractiveness by developing or acquiring the attributes of the new academic model. Universities competed for energetic, productive faculty, sometimes “buying” them wholesale, as when the nascent University of Chicago lured a large portion of the faculty of Clark University in Massachusetts to fill its faculty ranks. Or later, in the 1930s, when the New School for Social Research was created in part to provide a haven for scholars fleeing European totalitarianism.

Universities competed for students as well as for foundation grants and promising faculty. We tend to forget that in the early years of the twentieth century the leading private research universities that are now considered relatively small—most notably Columbia University, the University of Chicago, and the University of Pennsylvania—were among the largest universities in the country at the time in terms of student enrollment. By midcentury, what remains probably the most important federal intervention in higher education then transformed the field. The GI Bill—more formally, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944—promised grants to all veterans of World War II who were admitted to any college, anywhere in the country. Over ten years, this program provided subsidies of around \$50 billion—measured in current dollars. Its enormous effects included the transformation of American higher education from a system catering to a small stratum of society to one of (relatively) mass access. By allowing veterans to study at any university of their choice, the GI Bill helped newer institutions in the South and West compete with prestigious universities in the East and Midwest.

But what is most remarkable about this catalytic federal intervention in higher education is that it was not conceived as an education policy. Rather, it was an economic program designed to avert the widely expected postwar recession and unemployment that had followed World War I, providing education grants to lift demobilized soldiers out of disgruntled idleness into the edifying distractions of college life. To the degree that the GI Bill had educational aims at all, they were merely to enlarge the *scope* of American higher education—without altering its basic structure or dynamics. Its unintended consequences, however, were far-reaching.

Similarly, when the federal government did begin the sustained support of university-based research, it did so by emulating the competitive structures developed by private philanthropy. It is no accident that the National Science Foundation (NSF) was created to continue in peacetime (or, more precisely, during the Cold War) the experimental funding for university scientific research pioneered during World War II. The NSF and the National Institutes of Health (which were founded soon after NSF) made competitive peer-review of individual projects the principal form of research support, thus reinforcing already established patterns.

Private philanthropic foundations have been particularly important to the humanities and deserve special mention. The ideology of early twentieth-century foundations was “scientific philanthropy,” that is, the search for and targeting of the root causes of social problems, not the mere relief of suffering that had been the preoccupation of charity for centuries. Science, with all its new-found power, was the means for both search and cure. The question was: Could the humanities, the least “scientific” of fields, join in this model?

By the mid-1920s, the major philanthropic foundations of the time, the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation, sought to answer this question in the affirmative. ACLS, which had been created in 1919 to represent US scholarship in the International Academic Union, became a major element of foundation programming in support of the humanities. As a federation of scholarly societies, ACLS was both representative of and responsible to the academic community. As a small secretariat, the Council had the administrative coherence to be an appropriate partner with foundations in developing national mechanisms for the support of humanities scholars in the highly decentralized American university system. With ACLS as a partner, foundations could work across and through universities in early efforts to nurture what subsequently became known as area studies or to incubate new disciplines. Most notably, ACLS had the

standing to develop structures of peer review—one of the pillars of scholarly self-governance—for the support of individual scholars and their projects.

What is the place of the humanities in foundation philanthropy today? The glass is less than half full. We have our redoubts—those relatively few foundations that seek partnerships with academic humanists to sustain, advance, and apply the best scholarship and research. That short list must begin with The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, whose support of the humanities and arts in the United States exceeds \$200 million annually. It also includes the Carnegie Corporation, the Ford Foundation, and the Henry Luce Foundation. But among the next generation of philanthropies—those produced not by industrial wealth but by the productivity of the information age—only the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Packard Humanities Institute work in our fields. A recent report by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences noted that foundation giving to the humanities is a declining portion of such philanthropy,⁴ part of a larger decline in philanthropic support for higher education overall. We have seen most foundations become increasingly oriented to short-term results; they no longer see the university in general, let alone the humanities in particular, as the natural object of their support. In 1960, Ford Foundation President Henry Heald stated “that the strengthening of American higher education is one of the primary means by which the Foundation pursues its objective of advancing human welfare.”⁵ We don’t hear that very often anymore. Foundation officers today are less inclined to give “to” the university and more likely to give “through” the university in pursuit of other ends.

I certainly should note here that overseas donors have been benefactors of research and education in the United States, investing especially in the expertise for studying the culture and society they represent. We at ACLS and many other institutions, for example, have partnered with the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation to advance China studies in American colleges and universities. We have also received support from the Japan Foundation. Along with the Korea Foundation, they have all provided crucial resources for the development of East Asian studies in universities across the United States.

⁴ Lawrence, Steven, Loren Renz, and James Allen Smith (contributor). *Foundation Funding for the Humanities: An Overview of Current and Historical Trends*. New York: The Foundation Center, 2004. 1. Web. 23 Aug. 2008

⁵ Geiger, Roger L., *Research and Relevant Knowledge: American Universities since World War II*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2004. 110. Print.

Against this background, let me focus now on the contemporary scene. What are the structures of research support for the humanities, and what are some of the consequences—intended and unintended—of the design features of those structures? Keep in mind that the governing assumption of all of them is that what the humanist scholar requires above all is time and release from other faculty responsibilities.

The structure of support has the following features:

- Research support for the humanities is a small fraction of that provided to other areas of the university. In fiscal year 2006, universities recorded \$8.7 billion in research and development expenditures for the biological sciences, \$1.65 billion for the social sciences, but only \$208 million for the humanities.⁶ Public funding for the humanities is, shall we say, not ample. A quick review of President George W. Bush’s budget proposals for the following fiscal year gives you a similar idea of their relative priorities. His request of Congress:
 - National Institutes of Health: \$29 billion
 - National Science Foundation: \$6.2 billion
 - National Nanotechnology Initiative: \$1.5 billion
 - National Endowment for the Humanities: \$144 *million*

We call his request for the humanities “decimal dust.” This amount for the entire country’s humanistic research is less than 15% of the federal funding for science awarded annually *to a single university* like the University of California, Los Angeles; it is less than half of the overhead UCLA alone realizes from such grants.

While the humanities does receive more support from private philanthropic foundations than from the government, their relative share of private giving is also modest. In 2002 (the most recent year to be carefully analyzed), private

⁶ National Science Foundation. Division of Science Resources Statistics. *Academic Research and Development Expenditures: FY 2005* (NSF 07-318) and *Academic Research and Development Expenditures: FY 2006* (NSF 08-300). Cited in American Academy of Arts and Sciences. *Humanities Indicators Prototype*. Table IV- 10a. Cambridge, MA: AAAS, forthcoming 2008. Web.

foundations donated more than \$335 million to humanities activities, but one-half of that amount went to museums and historical societies, not to researchers. And donations to humanities activities represented only 2.2% of total foundation giving, a share that has been declining over recent years.⁷

- Most support for the humanities thus comes directly from universities themselves through investment in faculty—to whom they provide research time by means of appropriate teaching loads and sabbatical leaves. But the definition of *appropriate*, of course, is much debated and differs from field to field. In general, teaching loads are inversely proportional to extramural funding, meaning that humanists have far less time for research than their colleagues in the sciences.
- Campus-based centers, funded by universities and augmented by grants and philanthropy, have become increasingly prominent on the scene. There are now more than 100 of them, most of which offer forms of individual and collaborative research support or teaching release on a competitive basis.
- Portable fellowships from organizations such as ACLS, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and the Guggenheim Foundation may support six to twelve months of research leave. National residential research centers such as the National Humanities Center, the Radcliffe Institute, the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford, the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, and the Center for Scholars and Writers at the New York Public Library, provide similar fellowship support but require relocation for up to a year.
- Individual fellowships are extremely competitive (at ACLS, we receive up to 16 applications for every award in our central program). They are also limited in number. ACLS provides over 200 fellowships to US humanists; the NEH 200, and the Guggenheim Foundation around 60. All told, in recent years there were fewer than 700 portable and residential fellowships awarded to humanists and social scientists in the United States, while the total number of teaching faculty in these fields is about 113,000.

⁷ ---. Humanities Indicators Prototype. Table III -8c(1).

Let me illustrate these patterns by speaking directly from the recent history and current experience of ACLS. In an article he published in 1997, just before becoming president of ACLS, my predecessor John D'Arms noted that all elements of the national humanities infrastructure had weakened in the 1980s and 1990s. The NEH suffered severe budget reductions in 1995 that were magnified by a shift away from academic programs in favor of public activities. With a few notable exceptions, foundations had also reduced their support for the humanities. Private entities—ACLS, the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Humanities Center—had seen the value of their fellowship awards erode against inflation and the growth of faculty salaries.⁸ D'Arms warned:

Fellowships are not just a re-distribution of wealth but are the platform which supports a national consciousness and community in scholarship, by signaling selection committees' vision of high standards. If there are fewer of these national panels of first-rate scholarly assessors, or if those which do exist have fewer resources to distribute and therefore less opportunity to exercise comparative judgments of scholarly quality, the entire national system of evaluating (as well as of supporting) thoughtful, imaginative, venture-some, high quality work in the humanities is diminished.⁹

A simple remedy followed from John D'Arms's diagnosis: national agencies such as ACLS needed to increase their support for individual scholars. But where was the necessary new money to come from? ACLS turned to foundations and to individuals for support of a campaign to double its endowment devoted to fellowships over ten years and then redouble it in the following five. Thus far, the campaign has had considerable success, and as a consequence, ACLS has been able to dramatically increase its direct support of its fellows. In the 2007–2008 competition for fellowships that is now almost completed, ACLS will award more than \$9 million to support the research of individual US-based scholars. As one of only three national sources of support that does not require residence at a particular university or research center, ACLS realizes both the significance of this effort and how much more there is to be done.

⁸ John H. D'Arms. "Funding Trends in the Academic Humanities, 1970–1995: Reflections on the Stability of the System." *What's Happened to the Humanities?* Ed. Alvin Kernan. Princeton, NJ: Princeton U P, 1997: 32–62. Print.

⁹ John H. D'Arms. Letter to Alison Bernstein, Vice President, Media, Arts and Culture, Ford Foundation, 5 Nov. 1997. TS. ACLS offices.

But the important point for today's discussion is that nearly two-thirds of our donations come from colleges and universities. Our appeal to presidents and chancellors highlights our distinct purpose. Both ACLS and universities, we say, are in the business of identifying and rewarding excellence in scholarship. It is therefore particularly important to have national metrics of excellence; a robust ACLS fellowship program is one such metric. We appeal not just to the local self-interest of university administrators who want extramural support for their own faculty to increase, but to a higher good as well—the strengthening of a national system. That colleges and universities have responded so generously demonstrates the perceived need for a national structure in a decentralized system.

What are the issues and challenges that currently confront ACLS as we seek to carry out our role in supporting scholarly research and that we all face as we contemplate the future of the university? I will mention just five, from among many that can be identified: maintaining the integrity of peer review, understanding the different stages of the scholarly career, validating collaborative research, supporting digital scholarship, and sustaining the connection between scholarship and teaching. Each raises a number of important questions.

1. Maintaining the integrity of peer-review. As I noted previously, ACLS provides research support for scholars only through systems of rigorous peer review. Neither I as president nor my staff selects the projects or individuals to be supported; that is the role of independent committees of scholars convened expressly for that purpose. It is a labor-intensive process that depends on the good citizenship of the participating scholars. In the year just past, ACLS awarded fellowships and grants to more than 200 individuals, but that required the effort of over 400 humanists enlisted as reviewers.

The intensive peer review through which fellows are selected is more than an administrative mechanism. This rigorous process, we believe, provides an important forum distinguished scholars can use to discuss and reach consensus about standards of quality in humanities research. The care with which the process is exercised endows our fellowships with a kind of national certification of scholars' work, a value well beyond the financial stipends awarded. (This credentialing role is one reason that universities are willing to support ACLS directly.)

2. Understanding the stages of the scholarly career. Unlike many career paths, academic scholarship in the United States has a schematic set of ranks and gradations that are designed to

promote and demarcate achievement. But do they? Does tenure free the scholar to undertake particularly ambitious projects, or does the imperative of achieving tenure narrow and perhaps distort research designs? A generation ago, a promising dissertation could win a young scholar appointment as an assistant professor, and the publication of that dissertation merited permanent employment. Today, in some fields, we see advanced assistant professors working on—and nearing—the publication of not just their first or second, but their third book. Do these rising requirements advance scholarship or distort the profession? Do they oblige young scholars to extend their graduate education or take post-docs in order to build a tenurable publication record? James O’Donnell, the provost at Georgetown University, recently noted that a survey of newly appointed assistant professors at his institution found an average age of thirty-seven, with many in their forties. When your rising generation is, in Jim’s words, “slightly older than Mozart’s corpse,” are we limiting the potential for dramatic innovation in scholarship?

This is something ACLS has sought to address (with the support of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation) by creating two special fellowship programs focused on particular career stages: recently tenured associate professors and advanced assistant professors who have passed their pre-tenure reviews. By incorporating substantial additional support beyond a year’s release time, both aim to support projects with broader and more adventuresome aims than might be possible with normal sabbaticals. If the fellows selected in the first several competitions are indeed exemplars for the rising generation, then we can look forward to much ambitious and creative scholarship that can resist incentives to package research in easily marketable wrapping. We are pleased to note that our programs have exerted a ripple effect as well, inspiring many universities to introduce similarly targeted programs.

3. Validating collaborative research. The work of individual researchers producing scholarly monographs on well-focused subjects has proven to be a powerful engine for knowledge creation in the humanities. That said, we have seen a growing awareness that collaborative research in the humanities is undervalued. Collaborative practices offer opportunities to produce forms of scholarship that may not otherwise be possible. With the increased sophistication of scholarship today, no single person is likely to possess the full set of specialized knowledge and skills necessary to undertake certain projects whose intellectual questions are not comfortably housed within disciplinary boundaries. Often, two or more scholars in allied or different fields must come together to work on a particular problem or issue. Moreover, although not all collaborative endeavors are interdisciplinary, those that are often help to counteract a “silo effect” that pre-

vents scholars from learning about related work in other fields and from producing scholarship of interest to a broader audience. In addition, the developing cyberinfrastructure for the humanities is creating opportunities for working across disciplines and with a greater range and variety of sources, enabling scholars to work together in new ways. Changes to the nature and working conditions of scholarship call out for a greater variety of approaches in its practice.

Although collaborative research has long existed in the humanities, in the recent past it has generally been treated as the stepsister of single-author production rather than its equal. Not surprisingly, this lack of recognition has tended to produce reluctance to engage in an activity with few institutional rewards and some degree of professional peril—particularly among young, untenured scholars. With these considerations in mind, we at ACLS have been discussing with our constituents and with potential funders the possibility of developing a program explicitly dedicated to fostering collaborative research in the humanities.

4. Supporting digital scholarship. Digital technologies both demand and facilitate collaboration, and supporting digital innovation has become one of the priorities of ACLS. Digital information technologies are transforming the economic, political, and cultural life of our nation and indeed, the world. The humanities are taking part in that transformation but need help in order to do more. The humanities aim to understand and make meaningful the rich variety of human experience and creativity; in this century, more and more of that will take place online. The teaching scholars who form our member societies are naturally concerned with every advance in research and education. In each of the past five decades, therefore, our Council has issued a report on how technologies can aid scholarship and teaching. Our 2006 report, *Our Cultural Commonwealth: The Report of the ACLS Commission on Cyberinfrastructure for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, sought to provide decision makers in higher education, government, and private philanthropy a prospectus for making digital investments. I am pleased to report that it has inspired the National Endowment for the Humanities to introduce a digital humanities initiative of its own.

What will be the return on investment in the digital humanities? Given the Academia Sinica's own commitment to the National Digital Archives Program, I'm sure you know what they are. First, digital technologies dramatically increase access to original materials and to the means of understanding those materials. Massive digital collections of books, articles, images, and sound erase impediments of time and distance. The works of Confucius, Cervantes, Thomas Jefferson,

Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Frederick Douglass can now be accessed with a few mouse clicks. The ARTStor project founded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has assembled a digital library of more than one-half million images and has placed them alongside tools for classroom instruction at all levels. *The Making of America*, a project of the University of Michigan and Cornell University, offers online more than 10,000 books and 50,000 journal articles from nineteenth-century America. The student, teacher, or general reader is no longer restricted to the holdings of nearby libraries.

These vastly expanded and rapidly accessed materials also require and enable new ways of reading. Students come to grade school, high school, and college with the ability to read online, but not necessarily the ability to evaluate what they are reading. By reading multiple variations of different texts, they can develop the critical faculties essential to twenty-first-century information literacy. Another new form of reading is data mining, through which software programs developed by scholars probe masses of texts to discover previously invisible patterns of language and meaning. Other new research methods, such as scholars' use of geographic information systems (GIS) to read spatial and historical data together have become tremendously important as well.

The digital humanities require a special investment because they cultivate more than mere information. Having masses of texts, images, and sound online is not enough. If digitized materials are to be broadly useful, they need to be accompanied by tools for navigating, selecting, and analyzing the information available—tools, that is, for turning information into knowledge. And it is humanities scholars themselves who possess the critical expertise that must be applied to the selection and presentation of materials, and to the development of tools for their use, such as search engines, online references, and standards for classifying data.

Making peer-reviewed judgments about the digital humanities projects that deserve support requires multiple sets of expertise and a widened frame for their evaluation. We want our reviewers to be both knowledgeable concerning the intellectual substance of the proposed project and also experienced in the deployment of digital technologies. Projects in the digital humanities involve teamwork, technical standards, the selection of hardware and software and—most essentially—planning for the technological and intellectual sustainability of the project. These projects, therefore, resemble laboratory work in the sciences or theatrical productions in the arts

in a way that individualized humanistic research does not. Our peer-review needs to encompass all these factors.

5. Sustaining the viability of the teacher-scholar model. The American university system is the product of what we might call a mixed marriage, the union of two ethically and ethnically distinct parents. The system's father—or should I say, *Doktorvater*—was the German research university of the nineteenth century. With its emphasis on specialized inquiry and research productivity, the university theorized by Alexander von Humboldt inspired legions of young Americans who journeyed to the Continent to acquire the deeply structured learning unavailable at home. The system's maternal line is the English college, what we today call the liberal arts college. When higher education is viewed as alma mater, “our nurturing mother,” then undergraduate teaching is an institutional priority and the pedagogical ideal is to equip students with facilities for critical thinking, effective expression, and a broad background in the liberal arts, not specialized training in a specific discipline or profession. Over the past 150 years, American higher education has grown in scope and expanded in power by interweaving these two strands of its parental DNA. Individual faculty in this system assume the dual role of scholar *and* teacher. This paradigm—so deeply assumed in the United States that it is often implicit—posits that there is no disjunction between research and teaching, and that the scholar-teacher whose intellectual horizons are broadened by research is best able to educate students in the liberal arts, broadening their intellectual horizons and inculcating in them the same habits of lifelong critical inquiry practiced by the scholar-teacher. I should add that in contrast to many national academic systems elsewhere, the US university system exhibits very, very few institutions whose exclusive, or even primary, mission is research.

Today this model of the scholar-teacher is subject to multiple pressures and could become undone. Some question whether educational and professional expectations can coexist. I experienced this tension directly when serving as a dean at the University of California, Los Angeles. When faculty in my college won research fellowships (like those from ACLS!) to undertake substantive projects, UCLA shared in the recognition bestowed on their intellectual prowess and ambition. At the same time, my next reaction would be panic: Who would teach the courses these honored faculty would (temporarily) abandon? Observers are constantly weighing the balance of this system. Some see a “steady, irreversible shift of faculty allegiance away from the goals of a given institution and toward those of an academic specialty...leading to increased emphasis on research and on publication and on teaching one's specialty in favor of general

introduction courses, often at the expense of coherence in an academic curriculum.”¹⁰ Others worry about largely external pressures to emphasize teaching and neglect research, thereby relegating the faculty to training students for the job market rather than to developing them into inquiring and learned citizens.

The issues ACLS confronts thus lead back to consideration of the American university system as a whole. Not to put too fine a point on it, let me ask: Are the very dynamics that powered the rise of American higher education turning against it? As the structure of the university system changes, what are the implications for the support of research?

A distinctive strength of the American higher education system is that it blends public and private roles in both its financing and governance. Both public and private institutions receive both public and private funds, albeit in different proportions. But public—that is, governmental—support for higher education is declining significantly, and we are only beginning to glimpse the ramifications of that decline. Federal financial aid for students, for example, has diminished steadily over the past three decades, and most now comes in the form of loans, a form of support that students from lower-income families are less willing to accept. Federal grant aid, moreover, lags behind increases in the cost of higher education.

The share of states’ higher education budgets that goes to public academic institutions has also dwindled over time. When Clark Kerr, the man who coined the term *multiversity*, was chancellor of University of California, Berkeley, in the 1950s, the state provided 70% of the campus’s budget; in the 1980s, that percentage fell to 50%; by 2000, it was 34%. At UCLA, because it has a largely extramurally funded hospital and medical school, the percentage was even lower: 21% when I left in 2003; it’s 17% this year, and could be reduced further by an additional 10% after pending budget cuts. For the University of Michigan in 2000 the figure was 11%. The University of Virginia, a public institution, receives the same percentage of state funding as Stanford, a private university. This change burdens these public institutions and their students, whose tuition is raised just as the support they can hope for from government loans is declining, more likely to be a loan than a grant, and less likely to be need-based.

¹⁰ Robert Zemsky and William F. Massy. “Cost Containment: Commitment to a New Economic Reality.” *Change* 22 (November/December 1990): 22. Print. Quoted in William F. Massy. *Honoring the Trust: Quality and Cost Containment in Higher Education*. Boston: Anker P, 2003: 97–98. Print.

The secular reduction in the amount of public funding to higher education has serious consequences for the social position of the university and for the support of the humanities in particular. As public money becomes a smaller factor in university budgets, the market orientation and competitive practices that have always been a part of American higher education have increased in power. Each year, colleges and universities need to behave more like profit-making corporations, competing not just for students and faculty but through the development of marketable products: course content, logos for sports teams—and research results. Even state universities are increasingly attentive to the necessity of building their endowments through private donations, for endowments are the institution's most secure means of remaining competitive with other universities over the long term.

Recent responses from government policy makers to these changes further complicate the situation. Political leaders stress the economic role of higher education and ask how universities can enhance the international economic competitiveness of the United States and the individual competitiveness of university graduates in the labor market. This latter point was the focus of the 2006 report of a high-level commission appointed by the secretary of education, Margaret Spellings. This commission was categorically clear on what it saw as the university's role: "We want a higher-education system," it wrote, "that gives Americans the workplace skills they need to adapt to a rapidly changing economy."¹¹

A second and increasingly insistent response from policy makers has been to demand that wealthy universities devote some of the proceeds from their increasing endowments to offset the cost of tuition for undergraduates. A growing number of institutions are making that adjustment in breathtaking ways. Still, there is a climate of suspicion about how institutions of higher education deploy their resources and even hostility toward their traditional autonomy gathering force in political circles in the United States with which we all have to contend.

None of these trends is favorable for supporting research in the humanities. As universities turn increasingly to the market, it becomes more apparent that the humanities are among the least "marketable" of the university's "products." As government policy makers seek stronger regulation of university finances while asserting simplistic educational priorities, the humanities, whose principal source of funding is within the university itself, are likely to suffer. If we are to

¹¹ Commission on the Future of Higher Education. *Draft Report*. 11 Sept. 2006, 3. Web. 23 Aug. 2008

attract new investment, we in the humanities community will need to be ever more adroit in making the case for the importance of our work.

In that spirit, let me conclude with one more quote, this one from William James, the edition of whose complete works and letters was a 32-year-long project sponsored by ACLS. For me, it describes what the individual and the world needs and what the humanities provides. James writes:

I tried to make you feel how soaked and shot through life is with values and meanings which we fail to realize because of our external and insensible point of view.... There lies more than a mere interest of curious speculation in understanding this.... It is the basis of all our tolerance, social, religious, and political. The forgetting of it lies at the root of every stupid and sanguinary mistake that rulers over subject-peoples make.... No one has insight into all the ideals. No one should presume to judge them off-hand. The pretension to dogmatize about them in each other is the root of most human injustices and cruelties, and the trait in human character most likely to make the angels weep.¹²

We may live in the “information age” and earn our livelihoods in a “knowledge economy,” but human beings define themselves through values and make the leap from mere existence to a life through imagination and feeling. The humanities provide the perceptual and imaginative skills that make those achievements of the past and the creativity of the present meaningful. And we do so without asserting an opposition to science, or relying on an unproblematized notion of value, or retreating into a self-enclosed world of academic speculation. That is why support for the humanities will always be an investment in value.

¹² James, William. *Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals*. Cambridge: Harvard U P, 1983: 150. Print.