I would like to expand briefly on two projects that are part of the larger Humanities and Culture Initiative that Pat has just spoken about. The first is what we are calling the “Template Project” which is a cooperative venture among the major humanities disciplinary associations. The second is the Humanities Indicators project.

First a few words about the Template Project. The purpose of this project is so develop instruments that facilitate the collection of comparable data by the disciplinary associations in the humanities. Representatives from a number of humanities membership organizations including: the Modern Language Association, the American Historical Association and the College Art Association collaborated in the development of draft templates for gathering data from individuals belonging to the groups, and in a second template for gathering data from academic departments. The long-term goal is to collect data from all humanities departments in the universities and colleges. These data, we hope, will be used in the indicators project. This work was supported through grants from the Rockefeller and Hewlett Foundations.

Later this year, an experimental sampling of 200 to 300 departments of history, English and literature, art history, linguistics, and religion will survey using a common questionnaire. Data collection from political science departments earlier this year will be integrated into the analysis.

The Academy’s template project has utilized and drawn participation from a group of disciplinary organizations that formed a Coalition on the Academic Workforce (CAW). The Coalition collected comparable data on the use of part-time, adjuncts, and graduate students in the teaching of disciplinary subjects in higher education. Most of the participating organizations were constituent societies of the ACLS, but there was participation from chemistry and mathematics as well. The Coalition data were a valuable contribution both to understanding changes in teaching and in the preparation of template instruments for data collection from diverse organizations.

Let me now turn to the Indicators Project. In 1997 The American Academy of Arts and Sciences began exploring an indicators project in an effort to study the feasibility of an on-going Humanities Indicators publication and to provide models of content.

The Indicators Project is an effort to establish a framework for the compilation, analysis and publication of comprehensive trend data about the humanities. The Humanities Indicators will equip researchers and policymakers, universities, foundations, museums, libraries, humanities councils and other public humanities institutions with better statistical tools for answering basic questions about the undergraduate and graduate degrees in the humanities, employment of humanities graduates, levels of program funding, public understanding and impact of the humanities, and other areas of concern.
within and without the humanities community. The project is supported by a generous grant from the Mellon Foundation.

The goal of the Indicators Project is to provide information parallel to that provided by the Science and Engineering Indicators produced biennially by the National Science Foundation under the auspices of the National Science Board. Although the National Endowment for the Humanities has had authorization since 1985 to support production of similar data and indicators for the humanities, the agency’s leadership has not felt financially able to launch such an undertaking, and the Congress has not appropriated specified funding for such an effort.

What do we mean by this phrase Humanities Indicators? Indicators are descriptive statistics that chart trends in some phenomena of interest. They describe; they do not explain anything. At best, they provide a reality test against which arguments about changes in reality can be tested. If done well, they can provide a common starting ground for arguments about the nature or rate of change in some phenomena of interest. They answer “what” questions, not “why” questions. They can be somewhat like the Delphic oracle. Their interpretation is not always straightforward. They may mean different things to different observers.

**Humanities** is a more difficult term? What are the humanities? How do they differ from the sciences as we know them today? In the evolution of the modern German research university, knowledge was divided into Geisteswissenschaft and Naturwissenschaft. Unfortunately there is no good English translation for Geisteswissenschaft. The dictionary unhelpfully gives two meanings: Arts and Humanities. I always have liked the more literal translation--roughly the sciences of the spirit as contrasted with the sciences of nature where science is understood to be disciplined scholarship.

But the word “science” has taken on a narrower meaning associated with a distinctive method and type of analysis that leaves Geisteswissenschaft dangling at least as far as vocabulary is concerned. We have some idea of what a scientist is. But what do you call a humanistic scholar? “Humanist” does not seem the right term for someone who is a humanities scholar?

How do you differentiate the humanities from the sciences? The charter of the NEH defines the term as a set of disciplines --languages, linguistics, literature, history, jurisprudence, philosophy, archeology, comparative religion, ethics, history, criticism and theory of the arts, and those aspects of social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods-- but adds as part of its mission: the study and application of the humanities to the human environment with particular attention to reflecting our diverse heritage, traditions and history and to the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life. This latter is what I call the Public Humanities, although, of course, they must be informed by disciplinary scholarship as well.

There are two themes here: One has to do with methods, the other with the object of study. The methods are perhaps the easier part of it. Science stresses empiricism and uses experimentation, systematic observations, model building, and tries to represent its results in mathematical language. A hallmark is the production of propositions that can be falsified. For example, the major objection to intelligent design as a scientific enterprise is that it does not produce falsifiable propositions.

It is more difficult to characterize the methods of the humanities, but they are more likely to be described as qualitative, interpretive, richly descriptive (what Geertz called thick description), historical, or narrative. The goal is understanding rather than explanation; interpretation rather than prediction.
These are not hard and fast distinctions, but I think they do give a flavor of the difference between what we call the humanities and what we call the sciences if we just think about methods.

But there is more to it than methods. What are the objects of study? That is a harder question. Much of science is about the non-human parts of the world. Little of the Humanities can be said to be about the non-human parts of the world. But while we might like to say that the humanities are about human life, the biological and social sciences also lay claim to those objects of study. The difference, I think, lies in the types of questions being asked as well as the way they go about answering them. The humanities asks questions not just about what it means to be human, but what it means to be a good human being; not just about behavior, but about ethical behavior; not just about life, but about a meaningful life. What makes life worthwhile? What makes a society a good society? How to we understand the relation between the natural non-human world and the human world? It is the concern for the qualitative and value dimension of life, how we feel as well as what we know, that to my mind distinguishes the humanities from the sciences.

Assuming for the moment that we know what the humanities are, what would we like to know about them? What are the questions we would like to have answers to that Indicators might help with? We are currently organizing the Indicators around questions related to four large themes: education in the humanities; research and funding for the humanities; the humanities workforce, and humanities in American life. There will be several subdivisions within each of those large categories such as primary and secondary education; postsecondary education; graduate education and the scholarly pipeline; public and private funding; careers in humanities professions particularly the fate of PhDs in humanities; public participation in the humanities, and the status of libraries and museums. We would like to have at least 4 indicators within each category that cover different aspects of the topic. We are restricting ourselves to existing data from reliable sources. While we would like to disaggregate data both geographically and by discipline, it will not be possible to do so for many indicators. At a minimum we will present national data and data that contrast the humanities with other broad fields of scholarship. We are using only data that already exist and not commissioning any new data collection.

For some indicators that we would like there may be no available data that meet our quality standards. One of the tasks of the Indicators project will be to call attention to areas where there are little or no data with the hope that some agency will find it important to gather such data.

Our goal is to have a prototype set of indicators by next January and to circulate them widely for comment. Because, as I mentioned, indicators may be ambiguous as to meaning, we will commission a series of essays for each of the main themes. Some of these essays will describe the apparent trends in the data and explain the limitations of the data. Other essays will be more interpretive in nature and give the authors’ views about what the data mean for the status and future of the humanities.

After the essays are written we will hold at least one, perhaps more conferences to discuss the essays and critique the Indicators. We hope to get a lot of constructive feedback from the conferences and then revise the indicators. Our final goal is to produce a first real edition of the Indicators by the spring of 2008. We will produce them in several forms—hardcopy, a CD and on the web.

We expect to establish a web site in the near future on which we can post progress reports and perhaps try out some ideas about possible indicators, as well as provide an opportunity for the wider audience to suggest new indicators.
We expect that the project will generate a lot of interest and probably a lot of controversy. I am sure there will be disagreement about the meaning of various indicators. Our aspiration is to provide a solid base of data that everyone will argue from, whether it is that the glass is half full, half empty or whether it has a hole in the bottom and the life blood is draining out rapidly.

There is a description of the project in your packet that covers some of the things I have talked about and gives three charts that are examples of what the indicators might look like. There is also a copy of an article about the project from the Chronicle of Higher Education. I will be happy to answer any question now or later.