AMERICAN COUNCIL OF LEARNED SOCIETIES



ACLS Strategic Priorities 2020-2024

PROGRESS REPORT 2022



HIGHLIGHTS:

- The largest grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities in ACLS history to support public humanities
- A new Dissertation Innovation Fellowship program funded by the Mellon Foundation
- The first in-person convenings of our major DEIJ initiative, the Intention Foundry, in Chicago and New York City
- Successes in systems change led by the Luce Design Workshop for a New Academy
- A commission on digital scholarship about racial and social justice and a grants program aimed at supporting such projects
- Successful completion of our Centennial Campaign, surpassing our goal of \$125 million

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Our mission at the American Council of Learned Societies is to support the creation and circulation of knowledge that advances understanding of humanity and human endeavors in the past, present, and future, with a view toward improving human experience.

We carry out our mission in several ways:

- We foster inclusive excellence in humanistic scholarship by administering competitive fellowships and grant programs;
- We convene people to share insights, solve problems, and accelerate progressive change in our areas of study and higher education generally;
- We amplify the achievements of scholars, learned societies, and administrators in the humanities and social sciences as well as their collaborations with members of the public, librarians, curators, conservators, artists, scientists, and journalists;
- We renew humanistic knowledge through disciplinary and institutional change.

In May 2020, ACLS published a set of ambitious <u>Strategic Priorities</u> (appearing below in teal) laying out the work that we believe will help us create and sustain outstanding scholarship and the socially responsive and just conditions necessary for producing it. We identified priorities of value to the broader ACLS community of learned societies, independent scholars, newly minted PhDs, contingent faculty, tenure track faculty, graduate students, higher education and research library leaders, foundations, donors, and our own staff – all who share the common cause of supporting the advancement of humanistic scholarship.

We published our <u>first progress report</u> on these Strategic Priorities in the summer of 2021. We are now happy to share our second progress report in October 2022, after two and a half years of working mostly remotely under evolving pandemic conditions. Keeping a sharp eye on our financial resources, we have continued to expand our mission and operations, hosting carefully curated public activities, and pursuing change-oriented research and policy work.

As we embark with enthusiasm on the academic year 2022-23, we judge our progress on our Strategic Priorities to be strong. We have fulfilled some priorities and carried out substantive work on many more. We have adjusted our focus on a few priorities, the better to respond to changing circumstances, mostly caused by the persistence of COVID-19.

We are grateful for the continuing advice given by our Advisory Group and our Board. As always, we warmly welcome your comments and questions at president@acls.org.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2020–24 SEPTEMBER PROGRESS REPORT: YEAR TWO

I. Encourage scholars and scholarship responsive to the needs and interests of diverse audiences

- 1. Outstanding scholars in conditions of precarity are our top priority. We will consult with all our partners and funders on how best to support the people at greatest risk, including underrepresented minority scholars and first-generation scholars.
 - We will expand programs directed toward PhDs lacking full-time employment, especially
 given the challenges brought by the 2020 pandemic, including programs that bridge
 universities with a variety of cultural, community-based, and policy organizations outside
 academia. These programs will support scholars navigating a difficult hiring environment
 while also demonstrating the good that humanistic thinking does in the world outside
 academia.

PROGRESS

Following our practice in 2020, we directed all 60 ACLS Fellowships awarded in the 2021-22 competition to emerging scholars without tenure, including independent scholars, adjuncts, and contract faculty. We anticipate doing the same in the 2022-23 competitions.

We continued administering two fellowship programs that we designed and implemented in spring 2020, the Luce- and now Mellon-funded Leading Edge Fellowship, which places PhDs in non-academic posts working on pandemic recovery projects and social justice initiatives, and the internally funded ACLS Emerging Voices Fellowship, which places recent PhDs in year-long posts in our Research University Consortium member schools. In 2021-22, we supported 53 Leading Edge Fellows and 40 Emerging Voices Fellows, leading to a total number (since the programs began) of 58 and 130 Fellows respectively.

The Emerging Voices Fellowship was designed as an emergency measure in response to the impact of COVID-19 on the academic job market. We continue other efforts to support emerging and early-career scholarship, including in partnership with our Research University Consortium members. This is the third and final year of the Emerging Voices Fellowship. The cohort starting in fall 2022 will participate in a monthly colloquium that will introduce them to academic leaders, expose them to the inner workings of institutions of higher education, and help them prepare for successful careers.

The Luce/ACLS Program in China Studies continues its focus on early-career fellowships. 2021-22 was the fifth year of our partnership with the Getty Foundation in the administration of the Getty/ACLS Postdoctoral Fellowship in the History of Art, which supports emerging scholars of art history from around the world. The program has evolved in its short span to provide additional supports for scholars, such as virtual workshops on publishing.

The Mellon Foundation-funded Intention Foundry (IF), described in greater detail in the <u>2021 Progress</u> Report, held its second wave of meetings in spring and summer 2022. Senior Program Officer Jovonne Bickerstaff placed emerging scholars of color at the center of the planning for collaborative action with participating learned societies, with the goal of making the disciplines and interdisciplinary areas we represent more just and equitable.

- 2. With the aim of anchoring scholars in visible roles of teaching and writing in the public eye, we will support scholarship that fosters broad understanding of the value of humanistic study. We will make support a priority for:
 - Research-active faculty in teaching-intensive posts, who are successfully engaging the interests of undergraduates
 - Faculty engaging members of the public by working on topics of public interest or by communicating in publicly accessible ways

PROGRESS

We awarded the first Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Buddhism Public Scholars in the 2021-22 competition year, placing four early-career scholars in posts in *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review; Wisdom Publications;* the Detroit Institute of Arts; and the Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art. Fellows are responsible for projects at these organizations that advance public understanding of Buddhism.

We secured a \$3.5 million grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the largest the agency has ever given to ACLS. The competition was held in the fall of 2021, leading to 24 Sustaining Public Engagement awards, which support projects and people that bring the humanities into the public sphere.

With the support of the Luce Foundation, ACLS sought to gain deeper understanding of China studies by means of a structured review of the field, initiated in 2020. The review entered a busy new stage this year under the leadership of Senior Program Officer Deena Ragavan. Participants in fall 2021 online "brainstorming sessions" and the in-person Summer Institute in New York in June 2022, devoted close attention to the needs and perspectives of teaching-intensive faculty and scholars working on topics of public interest. The Luce China Studies Steering Committee includes scholars working outside the academy and scholars from a range of public and private institutions.

After taking steps to expand and diversify our Associates network beginning in 2020, we have increased the frequency and depth of our discussions with Historically Black College and University (HBCU) faculty and administrators. These discussions have resulted in our work on a pilot program of grant funding directed exclusively toward all ranks of HBCU faculty. With the approval of our Board, Senior Director of US Programs John Paul Christy and Program Officer Derisa Grant are consulting closely with HBCU faculty on the design of the program. The ACLS Board Working Group on Fellowships, established in 2020, consulted with staff on the forthcoming HBCU pilot program. It continues to meet several times per year.

Finding support for scholars in teaching-intensive posts and producing publicly accessible work will continue to be a major focus of effort in 2022-23 and beyond.

- 3. We will expand the definition of scholarship and what counts as a scholarly audience by developing fellowship and grant programs that promote inclusive excellence and sustain innovative, accessible work. Among the areas for which we will seek and direct targeted support are:
 - Scholarship on themes of urgent societal interest
 - · Collaborative work with the sciences and technology fields
 - Scholarly knowledge translated to broad audiences
 - Scholarship on historically underrepresented communities, languages, and histories in the United States and the areas of the world where ACLS has a long history: Asia, eastern Europe and Eurasia, and Africa

PROGRESS

In spring 2021, the Mellon Foundation provided \$2.6 million for our new Dissertation Innovation Fellowship, whose first competition opens in academic year 2022-2023. The program will make awards to doctoral students who show promise of leading their fields in important new directions. The fellowships are designed to intervene at the formative stage of dissertation development, before writing is advanced, and provide time and support for emerging scholars' innovative approaches to dissertation research – practical, trans- or interdisciplinary, collaborative, critical, or methodological. The program seeks to expand the range of research methodologies, formats, and areas of inquiry traditionally considered suitable for the dissertation, with a particular focus on supporting scholars who can build a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable academy.

A generous philanthropic gift made it possible for ACLS to collaborate with the Center for Advanced Study in Sofia Bulgaria to set up SISECSE, the Summer Institute for the Study of East Central and Southeastern Europe, a three-year program bringing together 15 scholars for two weeks each year. They will pursue their research, read and comment on one another's work, and participate in discussions about the shape and style of scholarly publishing in the 21st century.

In keeping with our plan for International Programs (IP) to create a strategic plan for international engagement, we convened two Global Engagement Strategy Sessions, one in December 2021 and the second in March 2022; another is scheduled for fall 2022. These meetings gather scholars in our current areas of international engagement in dialogue on the question of how best ACLS can nourish scholarship in these areas. The Luce China Studies Summer Institute also contributed to our internal strategic planning for IP.

The third and final Emerging Voices Fellowship competition introduced a revised call for open applications which specified that priority in the review process will be given to nominated applicants who:

- Show promise of making the humanities meaningful to non-specialist audiences
- Come from diverse backgrounds including historically underrepresented groups such as Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, American Indian, or Alaskan Native communities, and people with disabilities
- Have experience or show promise of leadership in institutional contexts or within their disciplines or interdisciplinary area of study.



Brittany Levingston

"ACLS is a very supportive organization that really does want you to do your best and to find where you want to be and to figure out how to best utilize, particularly in my fellowship, this credential that you have, this PhD. I'm learning that you can translate that experience and that knowledge and that high level ability. That you can translate that all the way into a different kind of career, whether that be tech, museum work, or any other kind of industry that you might be interested in."

Brittany Levingston
PhD, English and African American Studies, Yale University

2021 Leading Edge Fellow

Appointed to Pennsylvania Humanities Council for the project "August Wilson's Century Cycle and the African American Experience in Pennsylvania"

II. Strengthen relationships and address challenges together

- Collectively address challenges. We will convene groups from different sectors of the
 academy, including our established gatherings (i.e., Consortium deans and center directors, the
 Conference of Executive Officers, review panels, and fellowship-granting organizations) and
 new initiatives:
 - We will build new networks of those who see humanistic scholarship at the core of a college education, starting with liberal arts colleges.

PROGRESS

The ACLS Research University Consortium has increased to 41 members from 39 in 2020: we welcomed new members Rice University and the University of California, Riverside.

Upon consideration of the challenges regarding time and resources that the pandemic has brought to small liberal arts colleges in recent years, we seek now to work more closely with liberal arts colleges via our Associates network.

The 2022 Annual Meeting convened in person for the first time since 2019. It brought together ACLS Board members, representatives from learned societies, universities and colleges, our fellows, and other guests to discuss a range of issues. The Annual Meeting spotlighted the work done by five of the six teams involved in the Luce Design Workshop for a New Academy and invited attendees to get involved with the work: a majority signaled interest in ongoing participation.

To support the Luce Design Workshop, an ambitious collective effort to accelerate institutional progressive change, we set up a Networking Group and hired a new program officer, Heather Hewett. She will conduct research, develop blueprints for change, and offer general support for the Workshop through 2024.

Working with scholars across the continent, Vice President James Shulman is organizing the North American contribution to the World Humanities Report, a collective effort being led by the Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes (CHCI) and Conseil International de la Philosophie ed des sciences humaines (CIPSH) chaired by UC Berkeley Dean for Arts and Humanities Sara Guyer.

Considering the growing interest in making scholarship publicly accessible, in fall 2021, we began to meet regularly with publishers, librarians, and scholars to discuss the potential role of ACLS, focusing on the accessibility of books. We have established an advisory group and hired a program officer to support this effort.

 We will engage our Associate members in the process of forward-looking systemic change in academia, ensure that we are responsive to their needs, and continue to diversify the membership list.

PROGRESS

Our institutional membership network of Consortium and Associate members now includes 210 members. We have inaugurated monthly meetings online for representatives of our Consortium and Associate member schools that allow them to hold general conversations about issues of interest.

We continue to seek to make ACLS convenings such as our Consortium representatives' meeting, our annual gathering of fellowship-granting institutions, our Conference of Executive Officers, and our Annual Meeting places of collective knowledge-sharing and problem-solving.

 We will gather representatives from the learned societies, institutions of higher education, graduate students, scholars of color, and first-generation scholars in ACLS Summer Institutes funded by the Mellon Foundation to advance issues concerning the academy of the future, beginning with strategies to advance equitable and inclusive policies.

PROGRESS

Senior Program Officer Jovonne Bickerstaff has run two successful iterations of this program, the Intention Foundry, which was generously funded by the Mellon Foundation in 2019. The three-year project advances the member societies' efforts to increase equity, diversity, and inclusion. Centered around the aspirations and experience of scholars of color, it was held partly online and partly in person this year in Chicago and New York.

 We will encourage efforts to assess and improve practices and benchmarks of graduate training, because we see graduate education as an important linchpin of cultural transformation in the academy.

PROGRESS

The Luce Design Workshop (described in the previous <u>Progress Report</u>) is taking graduate education as one of its central areas of concentration.

We are drawing on the fellowship programs administered in US Programs to support our work for change in doctoral education. Senior Program Officer Desiree Barron-Callaci organizes professional development and networking activities for Mellon/ACLS Public Fellows and the Luce and Mellon Leading Edge Fellows, as well as selected fellows in International Programs. US Programs is also coordinating the Mellon/ACLS Scholars and Society Fellows, faculty who have committed to bringing their fellowship year of work outside academia back into their doctoral programs. ACLS also hired a program officer to support our data gathering and analysis in summer 2022.

2. Strengthen the societies. We will:

Increase the diversity of our member societies, focusing on those sustaining the study
of voices, experiences, and populations central to humanistic knowledge in the twentyfirst century. Knowing the value of these communities, we look to strengthen emerging
societies in the United States and around the world.

PROGRESS

In early summer 2022, we established an ACLS Board Working Group for Societies whose first priority is expanding our membership to reflect a broader range of fields of study.

We welcomed the American Association for Italian Studies at the 2022 Annual Meeting. We are currently in conversation with several societies whose members represent vibrant directions in the humanities and to whom we hope to offer helpful support.

• Consult on societies' needs and provide support at the level of governance and the planning of new directions.

PROGRESS

In fall 2021, Vice President James Shulman and Director of Governance and Society Relations Sandra Bradley organized a two-day workshop featuring Wellspring Consulting, with the goal of supporting the Executive Officers' work to clarify and amplify the value propositions that shape their membership strategies and choice of activities. The workshop was the culmination of a five-month consultation with representatives from the Conference of Executive Officers. Its results helped James and Sandra design a two-day retreat for the Conference of Executive Officers in spring 2022.

The work of the six groups established in fall 2020, which met regularly through March 2021, on "hacking a new society," "evolving governance," "graduate education reform," "undergraduate education," "advocacy," and "professional development" continue to guide our planning and our sense of the societies' varied needs.

3. Lead efforts at understanding and improving the status of humanistic studies. Any support we provide to the most vulnerable must be informed by solid understanding of structural challenges to humanistic scholarship at the institutional level. With our own resources and external support, we will:

- Assess institutional projects on selected issues
- Efforts to reverse declining undergraduate enrollments
- Improved metrics for scholarly productivity and service in humanistic fields
- Impact of public engagement

PROGRESS

We describe the Luce Design Workshop for a New Academy in the 2021 Progress Report. The Workshop, held in summer 2021, includes teams from six schools—UC Davis, UC Santa Cruz, the University of Pittsburgh, William and Mary, Washington University in St. Louis, and Stony Brook University—and over a dozen individual participants, including designers of new initiatives in the humanities and social sciences, leaders of humanities centers, writers about change in academia, ACLS leadership, and Elizabeth Peaslee, a design thinking consultant who is helping plan and guide our meetings. All of us share concerns about the flourishing of the humanities and interpretive social sciences in the United States and are committed to bringing about change in institutional and disciplinary vision and culture as well as in day-to-day practices in departments, divisions, and schools. Representatives from the six groups continued to meet with ACLS leadership through fall 2021, and five of them presented at a well-attended online panel in February 2022, "Change or Be Changed." The five also presented in a participatory plenary session of the Annual Meeting in April 2022.

To support our efforts to advance change, as mentioned above, ACLS hired a program officer for higher education initiatives in summer 2022.



Jasmine Alinder F'97, F'09

"What was appealing to me about participating in the Lucefunded Design Workshop for a New Academy was that it put us humanists in charge of the change narrative...It enabled us to author that change proactively and in collaboration, not just across our campus team, but with other teams from campuses across the country."

Jasmine Alinder F'97, F'09

Dean of Humanities and Professor, Department of History,
University of California, Santa Cruz

 We will establish a commission on the sustainability of digital resources and projects, including best practice standards for planning, financing, and operating models in university and research libraries.

PROGRESS

Program Officer Keyanah Nurse led a Mellon-supported Digital Justice grant competition for both seed and expansion awards to teams working on digital projects around issues of racial and social justice. Working with the Nonprofit Finance Fund, the program aims to consider questions of how to create value in ways that will enable these projects to be sustainable over time.

With support from the Office of Digital Humanities at the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Public Knowledge program at the Mellon Foundation, we have assembled a 21-member Commission on Fostering and Sustaining Diverse Digital Scholarship. The Commission, chaired by Professor Marisa Parham (University of Maryland, College Park), is delving into the questions at the intersection of work on social and racial justice and the digital humanities.

III. Lift the profile of humanistic knowledge

- 1. We will amplify ACLS's own visibility and effectiveness as an advocate by:
 - Encouraging staff and ACLS fellows to write and speak about the value of the humanities and social sciences, and encouraging fellows to engage in structural reform in their home departments.
 - Supporting advocacy at all levels, including to college and university leaders, on behalf of humanistic studies. We will keep graduate students, faculty, society directors, and administrators apprised of concrete strategies for supporting humanistic work, including new research initiatives, departmental planning, and fundraising.

PROGRESS

"Curating the Pandemic" was the first of our four "Humanistic Scholarship in the 21st Century" online public events. Held in September 2022, it featured museum curators discussing collaborations with scholars; with administrators and faculty working to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion; and with public communities around the country.

We made a concerted effort this year to enable staff to share the results of our fellowship outreach activities, the Intention Foundry, and the Design Workshop for a New Academy with our constituencies, including the ACLS Research University Consortium, the Conference of Executive Officers, and attendees of our Annual Meeting.

2. We believe that scholars in the academy can enrich their work and amplify the value of humanistic study by speaking to and working with writers, thinkers, and readers outside the academy who pursue, have studied, or are otherwise devoted to the humanities and social sciences. We will encourage the integration of voices and perspectives from outside the academy in our own thinking. We will seek support to establish a public program for Humanistic Scholarship in the 21st Century that will amplify our conversations about academia with partners from museums, libraries, corporations, community centers, and more.

PROGRESS

2021-22 was the second year of our online programming, "Humanistic Scholarship in the 21st Century." Participants have included ACLS fellows, foundation leaders, current university presidents, faculty leaders, and a member of the ACLS board. Our event series has included:

- "Curating the Pandemic: Capturing Inclusive Memories" (November 9, 2021)
- "Q&A with Scholars Representing K-12 Independent and Public Schools Part 1" (December 13, 2021)
- "Change or Be Changed: Designing Solutions for Challenges Facing the Humanities and Social Sciences" (February 10, 2022)
- "Q&A with Scholars Representing K-12 Independent and Public Schools Part 2" (February 14, 2022)
- "Career Benefits of a Humanities and Social Sciences Degree" (March 9, 2022)
- "A Healthy Ecosystem for Humanities Scholarship: The Evolving Role of Open Access" (May 9, 2022)

We will continue hosting events online even as we return to in-person gatherings and convenings, starting with our anniversary celebration on September 19, 2022.

IV. Empower ourselves to work responsibly and inclusively

- 1. We will enhance our stewardship of relationships that support our strategic initiatives. We are grateful to our Board of Directors and will work with them to increase their impact, including in existing convenings and a new program for "Humanistic Scholarship in the 21st Century." We will:
 - · Deepen our relationships with current partners (Consortium members, donors, and foundations), build new relationships, and continue to foster our good relations with and accountability to our funders and donors.

PROGRESS

We continue to maintain strong relationships with all our funders. Expansion of that group is a high priority for the remaining years of the plan.

· Complete the Centennial Campaign and establish a fundraising strategy to secure diverse funding resources to ensure our sustainability through our second century.

PROGRESS

We successfully completed the Centennial Campaign, exceeding our campaign goal of \$125 million and raising \$130 million.

 Build community among current and former ACLS fellows through regular communications and events.

PROGRESS

In addition to continuing the monthly newsletter and "Humanistic Knowledge" series, we have amplified the voices of awardees and community members by featuring more interviews and testimonial quotes on the direct impact of their relationships with ACLS on our website, on social media, and in our external materials. In addition, Philanthropy Associate Nicole Glotzer and Communications Manager Anna Polovick Waggy revived the ACLS LinkedIn Group to further facilitate community and professional networking opportunities for fellows and grantees. Since September 2021, the group has grown to more than 1000 members.

2. We will review our daily practices with the goal of nourishing an inclusive, creative, rewarding atmosphere. We will empower ourselves to act knowledgeably and with confidence by fostering a full understanding of our mission and goals across the entire organization.

PROGRESS

In fall 2020, we embarked on an antiracism initiative with the assistance of the firm Hyphens and Spaces, including the establishment of an external Advisory Group and internal steering group. Through summer 2021, we examined our internal culture, hiring processes, and review processes; we established tangible goals and means of measuring progress; and assigned responsibility for those goals to particular individuals. We measure strong progress across our fellowship programs, where we have increased outreach to scholars of color and streamlined the application process to increase access and equity. We continue to feature scholars of color and issues of concern to underrepresented groups in our public panels and various change-acceleration initiatives, like the Intention Foundry and the Design Workshop. In 2022-23 we seek to make our priorities and processes more transparent, internally and externally, clarifying responsibilities and metrics of success.

Under the leadership of new Chief Financial Officer Matthew Sapienza we have embarked on a new phase of forward-thinking budgetary analysis and planning. Working closely with other members of staff, Matt has introduced new systems designed to ease processes and handle the growing diversity of ACLS programming.

ACLS staff members continued to work mostly remotely in 2021-22, and some new staff live too far from New York to meet regularly in person. We meet in various configurations online (and occasionally in person) on a regular basis. Human Resources Manager Tina Li consults frequently on an individual and group basis on the well-being and job satisfaction of our staff.

Like many other organizations, ACLS experienced staff changes in 2021-22. Tina Li oversees our searches with close attention to diversity and equity.

We are deeply grateful to our funders, donors, reviewers, participants in our activities, and all others who have offered us advice and support throughout the year, which proved in some ways more challenging than 2020-21.

As always, we welcome your questions and comments at president@acls.org.



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